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edfENERGY London and South of England Media Awards

Kenton Sunday

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September 18, 2016

Mid edition No 730

EDUCATION

Special 20 page
supplement
inside

All the big issues
impacting on our
schools and
colleges

TELEVISION

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County baker pondering his options after Bake Off's dramatic move



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Embrace the pong! Why it can be a wake-up call

DEPENDING where you live in the county can bring with it a variety of reasons to put your senses in a spin.

From the architectural splendour of Tunbridge Wells, the lilting beauty of our countryside or the majesty of our coastlines; it is rarely anything but a visual treat.

From the scent of hops being brewed which floats across Faversham or the salty tang of the very air at our seaside towns, there can be no other county which makes your senses tingle.

Yet, just sometimes, there is a hint of something rather unpleasant in the air.

And if you live in an area surrounded by countryside and our working farms, then this week was a good case in point.

Because as crops are harvested, so resting fields are fertilised.

As a consequence, vast areas saw this week's hot weather tar-

nished a tad by a waft which could send you diving back inside for cover.

It has to be done, of course - we all treasure the county's rural roots and the manner in which land management enhances the county's environment - but when that stench fills your nostrils and then your lungs, you have to try very hard to not remember you've just taken a deep breath of particles you rather wish you hadn't.

Not that an air thick with a vile aroma is anything particularly new. Just ask anyone who has visited the

Thanet coast in recent weeks.

Huge piles of rotting seaweed have washed ashore sending a vile hum across nearby towns. It's almost enough to put you off your fish and chips. But not quite.

Because if nothing else it reminds us of our surroundings and the natural beauty which lurks on our doorstep. And that's worth the pong once in a while.



Editor **Chris Britcher**

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School confirms plans to convert to a grammar

By Chris Britcher

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A NON-selective school in Kent has become the first to make a bid to become a grammar following Theresa May's overhaul of the educational system.

The prime minister's pledge to encourage the creation of more grammars has sparked huge debate, but now Meopham School, near Gravesend, has become the first to say it wants to upgrade.

The school currently caters for just over 500 mixed-ability students and is run by the expanding Swale Academies Trust.

Jon Whitcombe, principal of the trust, explained: "Standards of attainment have risen significantly in recent years at Meopham and results for 2016 place the school as one of the top performing non selective schools in Kent.

"We understand from our knowledge of the local community that there is a need for additional grammar school places in the area.

"We also believe many parents would welcome the opportunity to have a local mixed grammar school provision."



CONSULTATION: Parents are being written to about it becoming a grammar in September 2018

Mr Whitcombe is now writing to parents to seek their views on the school becoming a mixed entry grammar for new entrants from the September 2018 term.

A spokesman added: "It is important to stress that, were this proposal to occur, those students currently in the school who have not passed the Kent selection test would continue to be taught and supported to achieve their full potential. However, from 2018

entrance would be via the Meopham selection test.

"The trust recognises this is a potentially contentious issue. However, it is important to stress that this proposal is at the very earliest stages of development and the trust is actively interested in ensuring a thorough and balanced discussion over what is right for the school and the community prior to any decision being taken."

The initial consultation closes on

September 28.

It is likely to be highly opposed by critics of selection at the age of 11.

Christine Dickinson, divisional secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "We have a lot of evidence to show when you cream off the top academic students, you end up with those that are left receiving a second class education."

■ **For more on the grammar school debate, turn to our 20-page education supplement.**

Controversial plan to build 520 homes on AONB rejected in court

ENVIRONMENTAL campaigners are celebrating after winning a lengthy legal battle to save an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) from housing development.

A planning application to build 521 homes and a 90 apartment retirement village at Farthingloe, near Dover, was quashed by Lord Justice Laws and Lord Justice Simon at the Court of Appeal on Wednesday after a campaign by the CPRE – the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

Judges said Dover District Council's planning committee failed to give legally adequate reasons for granting permission, contrary to an officers' recommendation which had made "trenchant criticisms" of the density, layout and design of the proposed development.

They recommended a reduction in the number of homes to 375 and changes to the density and design to protect the most sensitive part of the landscape.

This was ignored by both the

developer, China Gateway, and the planning committee.

CPRE Kent chairman Christine Drury said: "The developer and planning committee knew the scale of the development – one of the largest ever proposed for an AONB – would cause severe damage but rejected all efforts to mitigate this.

"This case is not just important to the people of Dover but for the principles of planning law because AONBs have the highest possible level of protection."

In his judgment, Lord Justice Laws said: "A local planning authority which is going to authorise a development which will inflict substantial harm on an AONB must surely give substantial reasons for doing so. I consider the committee failed to give legally adequate reasons for their decision to grant planning permission."

A spokesperson for Dover District Council said it was now considering an appeal to the supreme court.

Big turnout expected to bid final farewell to Mike O'Brien

THE funeral of Medway Council cabinet member Mike O'Brien will take place on Friday, his family confirmed this week.

Cllr O'Brien died last Thursday after a long illness. He was 72.

A popular figure across the political divide, for the last three years he had served as portfolio holder for children's services at the unitary.

Tributes were paid from all

corners of the council chamber to "an inspirational community ambassador" and a strong turnout is expected at a service at St Margaret's Church, High Street, Rainham.

Following the service a private interment for family and close friends will take place.

■ **Cabinet reshuffle – see education supplement inside.**

Heatwave makes records as temperatures soar then dip

TEMPERATURES smashed records this week with Gravesend recording the hottest September day in more than a century.

The mercury soared to 34.4C (94F) on Tuesday and the county was blessed with glorious sunshine for much of the week. It prompted Public Health England to issue a heat warning, advising extra care for the very young, very old and

those with certain health conditions.

However, the heatwave came to an abrupt end on Thursday and Friday as storms and heavy rain swept in.

The weather, this weekend, is expected to be a return to more regular levels with temperatures stabilising at around the 20C mark.

■ **Tourism enjoys a boost – see page 7.**



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Firm hits streets handing out £75 litter fines

ANOTHER council has teamed up with a private firm to impose hefty fines on those dropping litter on our streets.

Ashford Borough Council has signed a deal with private firm Kingdom to issue £75 on-the-spot fines across the borough.

Uniformed officers with body-cameras will target

those dropping waste including cigarette butts and chewing gum, although the council says the private firm does not have a target for how many fines it can issue.

The 12-month trial period began this week. The council says profits will be invested in environmental projects.



SALE: One of stone pieces up for grabs

Blood victim: 'Believe it when I see it' as PM hints at scandal inquiry

By Chris Britcher

chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

A VICTIM of the contaminated blood scandal says he remains sceptical of the intentions of prime minister Theresa May after she revealed in the House of Commons she was considering setting up a Hillsborough-style independent panel into the issues.

Steve Dymond, 60, from Broadstairs, contracted hepatitis C after receiving an infected blood product to treat haemophilia, a condition which prevents your blood from clotting normally.

He was among thousands of sufferers who were given products by the NHS during the 1970s and 80s, which included blood sourced from a variety of donors, among them drug addicts and prisoners from the US.

Since then 2,500 have died from illnesses such as hepatitis, which causes disease of the liver, and HIV.

The government set out plans earlier this year for a reformed system of support which will see every victim receive a regular annual



PMQS: Theresa May this week

payment for the first time.

But Labour's Diana Johnson has urged Theresa May to look at setting up a review into the "biggest treatment disaster in the history of the NHS" and suggested the prime min-

ister should use the Hillsborough Independent Panel which oversaw the release of hundreds of thousands of documents relating to the Hillsborough disaster as the model to follow.

Mrs May told the House she would consider the suggestion as she responded during prime minister's questions.

She said: "I recognise the concern that people have about contaminated blood and will consider the point that you have made."

But Mr Dymond said: "Successive governments over the past 35 years have systematically and cynically brushed off any requests to hold a public inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal. If the PM is true to her words that her government is all about 'fighting against burning injustice' and she was not just bandying a cheap soundbite around, then a public inquiry must be unavoidable."

"Any sense of justice for victims which may emerge from such an inquiry is likely to be slight comfort and scant consolation for the 2,500 dead from the scandal."

Your chance to own piece of cathedral

A SPECIAL auction takes place next Saturday giving anyone the chance to own a remarkable chunk of one of the world's most historic and magnificent buildings.

Stone removed during the complete renovation of the Great South Window at Canterbury Cathedral – some of which dates back to when the window was first built in the 1420s – will go under the hammer on September 24 at the Canterbury Auction Galleries.

It will include some intricate pieces taken from the window which has been rebuilt and repaired throughout its long history.

The massive conservation project was initiated after the window started to crumble in 2009. Seven years and £2.5m later, the scaffolding outside the window, which showcases historic stained glass, will finally be removed on October 1 (as reported in last weekend's KoS – available at kentnews.co.uk).

The auction starts at 2pm with all money raised for the sale going towards future conservation work. Viewing gets under way at 10am at the cathedral's stonemasonry yard in Broad Oak.

There are 140 separate lots of stone up for grabs.

For details and how to bid, see www.thecanterburyauctiongalleries.com.

War memorial back after 80 years lost

PARISHIONERS will celebrate the return of a war memorial to their local church this weekend, after the first plaque was lost more than 80 years ago.

The memorial to 60 men who died in the First World War will be dedicated by the Bishop of Rochester during today's service (Sunday) at Christ Church in Milton-next-Gravesend.

The original plaque was officiated in 1922, but by 1935, the church was on the brink of falling apart. A decision was made to dismantle the building and move it brick by brick to its current home. The church was saved, but the memorial was lost in the process.

Three years ago the plaque was dug up, but the names had worn away. Fortunately the church had kept a list of the names, and a new memorial was made.

Since then, the church has managed to track down 10 relatives of the brave men whose names mark the plaque, all of whom have been invited to this weekend's celebrations.

Medway's latest £18.9m bridge opens

AN £18.9 million bridge spanning the River Medway was officially opened this week.

It spans the stretch near the villages of Wouldham, Burham and Eccles on the river's east bank and Halling to the west, in a move it is hoped will boost travel, job and education options, plus improved emergency service access.

It comes as part of a development deal with Trenport which is seeing 1,000 new homes built on the site of the former Peters Line & Cement Works and its quarries. The £50m community, Peters Village, includes a village centre with shops and supermarket, medical centre, pharmacy and school.

Housebuilding started earlier this year, and is expected to be complete by 2022.

Chris Hall, director of developer Trenport explained: "Peters Village represents the next step in a vision for the re-use of redundant Medway Valley cement works first laid out in the mid-1980s, and the new bridge now opens up possibilities for the next stage at nearby Bushey Wood."

NHS trust gets £67m research funding

A HEALTH trust which provides specialist services for young people in Kent and Medway has received a £67 million cash injection to fund further research.

The South London and Maudsley NHS Trust offers services for those require hospital admission for serious mental illness and outpatient treatment for adults with ADHD across the county, as well as substance misuse services for residents in Bexley.

The funding from the Department of Health will be spread across five years and will allow research into ground-breaking treatments and care for mental health and dementia.

Maudsley's expanded Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) will bring together scientists, clinicians, mental health professionals, service users and carers, to improve clinical care and services across the field of mental health.

Dr Matthew Patrick, chief executive of the trust, said: "By 2021, we aim to involve 50,000 patients in new treatment studies, trialling new treatments, and introducing new digital interventions into routine NHS use."



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Look out for a feature from The New European in today's paper
- you can use this voucher to try a copy for half price! See page 48

Staycations fuel tourism boom

By Chris Britcher

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THE county's tourism industry looks to have cashed in this summer with preliminary figures suggesting a big rise in visitor numbers.

After a slow start to the good weather, figures from the county's tourism champions Visit Kent's monthly business barometer show a very positive picture for numerous tourism attractions across the county, with visits up 18.8 per cent in July alone – the biggest increase year on year increase since 2013.

Visit Kent says data for August is still being confirmed, but early indications show a similar picture with several attractions reporting a rise in visitor numbers. And with another heatwave predicted in the next few days, September could be another a hot month for tourism businesses.

Visit Kent CEO Sandra Matthews-Marsh said: "We are thrilled that the hard work of our partners appears to have paid off this summer.



COAST: Viking Bay.

Pic: Visit Kent

"The UK has been up against some pretty tough circumstances this year – the shock of Brexit, awful terror incidents in Europe, and some initial poor weather.

"But Kent's tourism industry is nothing if not resilient, and local tourism businesses have been working tirelessly to increase their marketing campaigns and heighten their al-

ready warm welcome to new UK and international visitors.

"This paid off with the arrival of the great weather in July and August, which looks set to continue into September, with coastal areas doing particularly well."

Visit Kent's business barometer is compiled every month, based on feedback from tourism businesses, to give a regular 'snapshot' of how the industry is performing.

The most recent data shows that attraction numbers were up 18.8 per cent in July (compared with July 2015), with the good weather and increased marketing activity credited as major factors in the increased visits.

Among the attractions already indicating positive August figures are Dreamland Margate (despite its main attraction the Scenic Railway rollercoaster being out of action for much of the peak season), Penshurst Place, Rochester Castle, Sissinghurst Castle and Gardens, and Port Lympne Reserve and Howletts Wild Animal Park.

Ukip hopeful wants crack at Witney seat

DARTFORD lawyer Elizabeth Jones has put her name forward to contest the Witney by-election following former prime minister David Cameron's decision to step down as an MP.

Mrs Jones, who failed in her bid to replace Nigel Farage as Ukip leader on Thursday, said she thought the seat was "vulnerable" and she could spring a surprise. Mr Cameron polled more than 60 per cent of the vote at the last general election.

Food awards launch

PUBLIC voting for the Taste of Kent Awards 2017 have opened after the event was launched at Allington Castle on Wednesday night.

The awards, organised by local food and drink champions Produced in Kent, aims to showcase the county's finest products.

To cast your vote, visit www.tasteofkentawards.co.uk before voting closes at noon on January 3, 2017.

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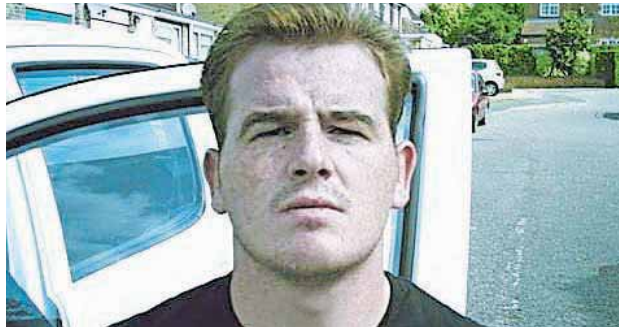
Countywide trickster told to pay £130k in compensation

A CONMAN who intimidated people across Kent into paying for shoddy workmanship on their driveways, has been ordered to pay a total of more than £130,000 in what the county council's trading standards' department described as one of its worst ever cases.

The team began its investigation in 2013 and led to 12 months' imprisonment for Owen Saunders, of London Road, Wrotham, in June 2015.

The original criminal case involved four victims from Whitstable, who were conned out of £28,500 by Saunders (pictured), trading as Berkeley Driveways, for work which was so shoddy that an independent expert estimated the value to be just £271.

Trading standards continued its investigation into Saunders'



activities and, after scrutinising his bank statements, identified numerous other potential victims.

Twelve more victims came forward, from Sevenoaks, Bearsted, Broadstairs, Paddock Wood and

Coxheath.

Saunders has 14 days to pay compensation of £68,330 to his victims, or face another 21 months' imprisonment. He must pay £63,036.56 in costs to KCC.

Architecture academic part of Westminster plan

AN architecture expert from the University of Kent, carrying out a major survey of the Palace of Westminster's ventilation system, was one of the voices adding to mounting concerns the home of our government is crumbling to dust.

Last week a joint committee report by MPs and peers warned it was in need of some £4 billion worth of repairs in a massive operation which could take up to eight years. Without it, it warned, the palace was at risk of a "catastrophic event".

It would mean MPs have to temporarily vacate the building while work is taking place.

Dr Henrik Schoenefeldt, a University of Kent expert in sustainable architecture, is conducting the first systematic survey of the ventilation of the

home of the House of Commons and House of Lords.

He is working on a detailed reconstruction of the House of Lords' ventilation and how it changed over time, yielding critical new insight into the lost Victorian system. Consequently, he has been working with surveyors and staff on the Palace of Westminster restoration and renewal programme to explore forgotten voids inside the building.

His research formed part of the report into the state of the building that led the joint committee on the Palace of Westminster warning of the risks.

Dr Schoenefeldt is senior lecturer in sustainable architecture at the university's Kent School of Architecture.

Trees get vandalised

FOUR recently planted trees have been damaged in a second spate of vandalism beside Aylesham railway station.

It is believed the vandals struck last Thursday evening, September 8, causing an estimated £2,000 worth of damage.

It follows similar incidents in July.

Fright night fundraisers

CHILDREN's hospice Demelza is holding two Halloween themed fundraising runs in Maidstone's Mote Park on October 28.

The Monster Dash and Running Scared are 5km - one for all ages at 5pm, the other for 16-plus competitors at 8pm.

Runners are warned to expect a fright.

Lock's £3m upgrades

THE Environment Agency has started work on a £3million refurbishment of East Farleigh Lock, near Maidstone.

Work will also include installing a new fish and eel pass on the lock, which was originally constructed more than 100 years ago.

Widdy set for return

FORMER Maidstone MP Ann Widdecombe will be the guest speaker at Hi Kent's charity dinner at the London Beach Hotel in Tenterden on November 4.

Tickets for the event, to raise funds for the hard of hearing and deaf support organisation are on sale now.

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Top Three Stories



1. Minister hails progress

Philip Dunne visits Medway Maritime

2. Bowie pipped to award

Skeptical beat Kent legend to Mercury prize

3. Chaos at crossing

Repair works cause lengthy queues

The Essential Guide:



...to Dreamland

Everything you need to know about the historic Margate amusement park



FEATURED PHOTO GALLERY: Gurkhas from the county are continuing operations in Afghanistan in their role of providing security for Nato advisors across Kabul City.

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Top Three Blogs



1. Don't text and drive

Sooner or later it'll cause fatalities

2. Remakes are killing TV

They passed their sell-by dates years ago

3. It's time to go, Jeremy

Why Corbyn is holding Labour back

Results of the KoS Online Poll

Will you watch Bake Off when it moves to C4?

- 1 Yes I'm baking mad! - 0%
- 2 Only if Paul Hollywood stays - 30%
- 3 No, it won't be the same - 60%
- 4 Never watched it, never will - 10%

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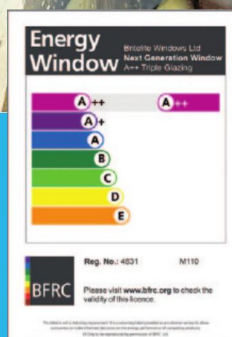
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**BESPOKE
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Will Paul Hollywood quit too as Bake Off's recipe is all change?

He's been a household name as a judge, but there are doubts whether Wingham baker will sign up

A QUESTION mark hangs over the future of Kent baker Paul Hollywood as a judge on TV's Great British Bake Off, after it dramatically switched to Channel 4.

In a move which left millions of devoted viewers stunned, Love Productions, which produces the show, confirmed the deal this week.

It is understood the BBC had offered to triple its annual fee to keep its top rated show and was prepared to pay £15 million.

But Love Productions wanted more, and sold it for what is believed to have been around £25m a year.

A clause in its contract with the BBC means the publicly-owned commercial broadcaster (C4) cannot show a series in 2017 and is expected, instead, to stage a celebrity version to fill the void.

However, it will be a show without popular presenters Sue Perkins and Mel Giedroyc. The long-term comedy partners this week confirmed they would "not be following the dough" after the show moves home (see box off).

And that has now put the spotlight on judges Paul Hollywood and Mary Berry.

It is believed the judges were firmly of the belief that it was due as much to the presenting team as to the format, that the show was such a runaway success.

Now both are said to be weighing up their options.

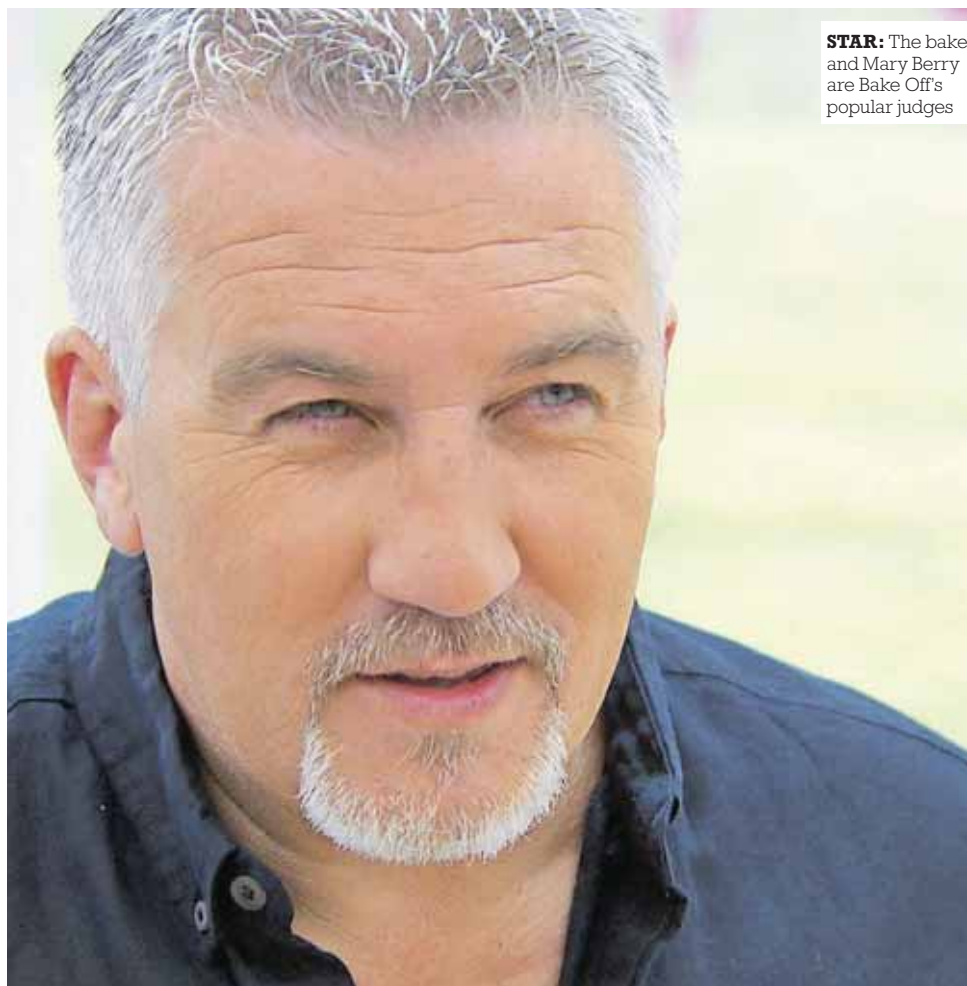
Although unconfirmed, it is believed both Mr Hollywood and Mrs Berry, 80, earn around £500,000 each from their role.

Mr Hollywood, 50, who lives in a Grade-I medieval home, worth £795,000 in Wingham, near Canterbury, was made a household name through the show.

The son a baker, he was born in Liverpool, and original trained as a sculptor before being persuaded to join the family business.

After specialising in baking, he worked as head baker in a string of the country's top hotels, including London's famous The Dorchester.

After travelling for several years,



STAR: The baker and Mary Berry are Bake Off's popular judges

he returned to set up an artisan bakery in Aylesham, near Dover, where he put his skills into producing products for major suppliers such as Waitrose and Harrods. It went bust two years ago.

He has dabbled in TV since 2002 but it was in 2010 when he was teamed up with Mary Berry for BBC Two's Bake Off that elevated him to superstardom.

The show proved so popular, the

corporation switched it, two years ago, to a prime-time BBC1 slot.

Last year's final was the highest rated TV show of the year, pulling in 15.1 million viewers, and 10m tuned in for the first episode in this year's series.

But in what has rocked viewers and industry experts alike, the BBC lost the rights to show future series after losing the contract to Channel 4 earlier this week. The three-year con-

tract is believed to be worth a total of £75m.

Both Mr Hollywood and Mrs Berry had, at the time of going to press, refused to confirm if they would follow the series. It is believed Mr Hollywood is currently in Los Angeles and, at the point of going to press, had yet to issue a statement.

Mr Hollywood has previously spoken of he and his co-stars' allegiance to the BBC.

BRAND FAVOURITE

FORMER Tunbridge Wells schoolgirl Jo Brand has been installed as the hot favourite to host the new-look Bake Off when it switches to Channel 4, say the bookmakers.

Raised in St Mary's Platt, near Sevenoaks, the former nurse has long been one of the UK's top comics and is the host of Bake Off spin-off show *An Extra Slice*.

She is 6/1 favourite to replace Mel Giedroyc and Sue Perkins.

Other popular names in the mix include actress Jennifer Saunders with 8/1 odds, comedian Sarah Millican at 12/1 and comic Ed Byrne at 16/1 along with presenter Davina McCall.

The bookies are also offering odds on Ms Perkins and Ms Giedroyc changing their minds and presenting the next series, as well as odds on Bake Off returning to BBC One.

William Hill spokesman Joe Crilly said: "It is very early to be speculating who will take over from Mel and Sue especially given that they are only 5/1 to perform a U-turn and return next time out. There will no doubt be a clamour from the nation's top presenters to bag the hottest ticket in town."

"Channel 4 are buying a format, but without the people who made it great, it risks being little more than your average cooking shows."

He added that he suspects "there is every chance it will return to the BBC next summer", with 8/1 odds of Bake Off staying on the BBC in 2017.

During an appearance on *Top Gear* this year, he spoke of the potential of them leaving the channel if the show moved.

He said: "It's not up to us, it's up to the production company, but as far as Mary, Mel, Sue and myself are concerned we want to stay on the BBC."

The show's huge success has been put down to its simple format, presenting team and its ability to appeal to everyone from children to OAPs.

MEL AND SUE: 'WE WON'T FOLLOW THE DOUGH'

HOSTS Sue Perkins and Mel Giedroyc revealed they would not return to the Bake Off next year on Tuesday afternoon – a little over 24 hours after it was confirmed Bake Off was leaving the BBC.

The pair released a joint statement to reveal the news, in which they said they are "not going with the dough".

They added that they were "shocked and saddened" to learn of the Bake Off's move from the BBC.

They continued: "We made no secret of our desire for the show to

remain where it was. The BBC nurtured the show from its infancy and helped give it its distinctive warmth and charm, growing it from an audience of two million to nearly 15 at its peak."

They ended their statement: "We've had the most amazing time on Bake Off, and have loved seeing it rise and rise like a pair of yeasted Latvian baps. We're not going with the dough. We wish all the future bakers every success."

Their innuendo-laced references to things such as soggy bottoms

and hot baps, as well as comments such as "You have got two hours to pop Mary's cherry..." , have been a hit with viewers.

The BBC said it had "made a very strong offer to keep the show but we are a considerable distance apart on the money".

Its statement continued: "The BBC's resources are not infinite. The Great British Bake Off is a quintessentially BBC programme."

Channel 4 said it was "very proud" to be the new home for the series.



Constituency re-shuffle may put major county seat under threat

Faversham and Mid Kent would be no more and Helen Whately would be out of a job under plans by the Boundary Commission to reduce the number of MPs across the country from 650 to 600 by 2020

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

A KENT MP could be out of a job come the next general election after the Boundary Commission this week released details of a dramatic constituency shake-up.

The independent body is redrawing the country's electoral map in an attempt to reduce the number of politicians in parliament from 650 to 600, with the changes set to come into effect at the next election in 2020.

The move is aimed at ensuring constituencies have similar populations – between 71,031 and 78,507 – and could reportedly save taxpayers £66 million over five years.

As a result, it proposes a significant change in the county, including the scrapping of the Faversham and Mid Kent constituency, currently represented by the Conservative Helen Whately, who succeeded fellow Tory Sir Hugh Robertson in 2015.

In its place would be a combined Canterbury and Faversham seat, which would include ten wards from the existing city constituency, including the town itself, six wards from the existing Faversham and Mid Kent constituency, including the town of Faversham, and two wards from Dover.

Speaking following the announcement, Mrs Whately said: "I'm honoured to represent Faversham and Mid Kent.

"It's a glorious constituency, stretching from the historic market town of Faversham, across the North Downs, to the low weald, Headcorn and Boughton Monchelsea.

"I hold my surgeries in beautiful medieval villages like Lenham and Bearsted, and in new community centres built to support growing populations on the edges of Maidstone and Faversham.

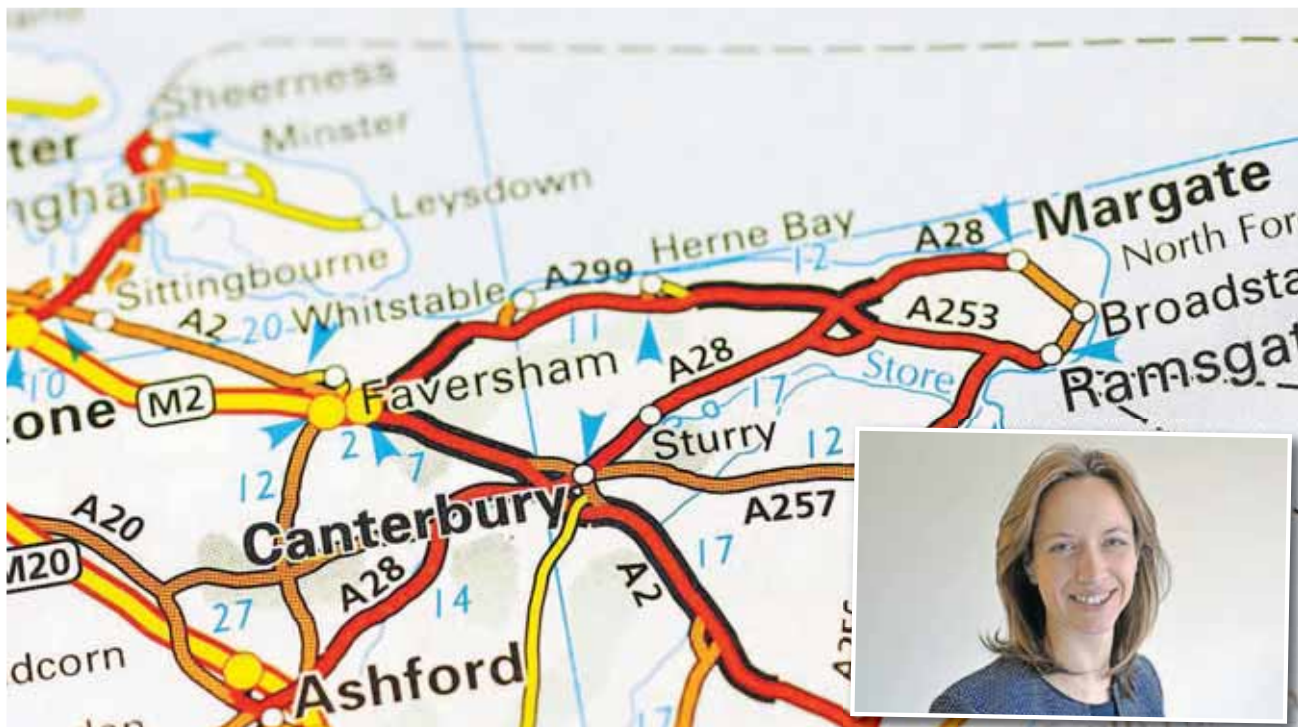
"Some of the pleasure of the job is representing such different communities and being an advocate for all my constituents.

"It's sad that the Boundary Commission's draft proposals would split up the Faversham and Mid Kent constituency – but the rationale behind the review is to make all parliamentary constituencies a similar size, so each person's vote carries the same weight.

"There is now a consultation period, so people can give their views on the proposals.

"Meanwhile, I will keep on working hard for everyone across Faversham and Mid Kent."

However, Mrs Whately's seat is not the only one to come under scrutiny – in fact Gordon Henderson's Sittingbourne and Sheppey seat appears to be the only Kent constituency to be



CHANGES: The proposals would affect a number of Kent constituencies, most notably that of Helen Whately, inset, whose seat is set to be scrapped

unaffected by the changes.

To ensure Dover is within five per cent of the electoral quota having lost two wards to Canterbury and Faversham, Sandwich and the wards of Little Stour and Ashstone would be included.

A cross-border constituency between Kent and East Sussex, called High Weald, would be created, as the commission explains: "We considered that the similarity of areas on both sides of the county boundary and the geographical nature of the Weald meant that this was the most suitable place in which to create a constituency across the county boundary."

The seat would feature four borough of Tunbridge Wells wards, including the town of Cranbrook, and seven borough of Ashford wards, including the areas of Tenterden and Biddenden.

As a result, the existing Tunbridge Wells constituency would be reconfigured in order to have an electorate that is within five per cent of the electoral quota.

Sixteen wards of the existing constituency, plus five district of Sevenoaks wards from the existing Tonbridge and Malling constituency, would make up this area.

Consequently, a Tonbridge and The Weald constituency has been proposed that includes nine of Tonbridge and West Malling's current wards, four from Maidstone and The Weald including Staplehurst and

seven wards from Faversham and Mid Kent, including Headcorn and Harrietsham.

Maidstone would be more "compact" featuring the whole town and the outlying villages of Barming, Bearsted and Otham.

Defence secretary Michael Fallon's Sevenoaks would include all current wards except Ash and New Ash Green, which could be transferred to the proposed Gravesham constituency, and three wards from the existing Tonbridge and Malling constituency, including the town of Borough Green.

In Dartford, the only changes proposed is the transfer of Hartley and Hodsoll Street to Gravesham, while Higham would be switched to Kelly Tolhurst's Rochester and Strood constituency, which would also feature no other changes.

Gillingham and Rainham, held by Rehman Chishti, would be largely unchanged, apart from the inclusion of the Lordswood and Capstone ward

from the existing Chatham and Aylesford constituency, which would absorb wards including the towns of East and West Malling, resulting in it being renamed Chatham and The Mallings.

Work and pensions secretary Damian Green's Ashford, meanwhile, would include 27 of its current wards plus Saxon Shore from Folkestone and Hythe in order to, much like Maidstone, create a more compact, urban constituency.

Dover's Damian Collins' seat would undergo no further changes but there would be a significant revamp elsewhere in the east of the county, with the creation of a new Thanet East constituency.

This would comprise the majority of Craig Mackinlay's South Thanet constituency, and five wards from Sir Roger Gale's Thanet North seat.

It would encompass all three of the popular resort towns of Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs.

A new North Kent Coastal constituency

would then include the remaining North Thanet wards and five wards from Canterbury, between them comprising the towns of Herne Bay, Westgate-on-Sea and Whitstable.

A public consultation will now take place and a final decision will be made in 2018.

Senior Labour members across the country have criticised the proposals, claiming the shake-up is politically motivated and aimed at hurting the party at the next election by weakening key areas.

Vince Maple, leader of the Labour group on Medway Council, agrees: "One of the things I am concerned about is the Conservatives say this is being done to reduce the cost of democracy but to then have more unelected representatives in the House of Lords is completely the wrong approach.

"MPs are now likely to be even more stuck – I think this is the wrong time to be looking at this."

PROPOSED CONSTITUENCIES...

Ashford (71,303)
Canterbury & Faversham (72,011)
Chatham & The Mallings (75,494)
Dartford (72,180)
Dover (76,650)
Folkestone & Hythe (77,333)

Gillingham & Rainham (75,283)
Gravesham (76,583)
High Weald (74,102)
Maidstone (71,284)
North Kent Coastal (75,023)
Rochester & Strood

(78,455)
Sevenoaks (76,611)
Sittingbourne & Sheppey (75,638)
Thanet East (78,130)
Tonbridge & The Weald (71,575)
Tunbridge Wells (73,871)



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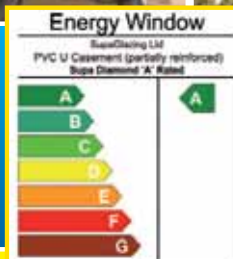
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Lib Dem leader: We can win back county's disillusioned

Humiliated in the 2015 general election and with a leader who has yet to reach household name status, the Liberal Democrats face a tough road back to prominence. But as Tim Farron tells KoS this week, he's confident he can do it...

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

TIM Farron has issued a rallying call to disillusioned voters and politicians alike across Kent to help the Liberal Democrats become "the open, united opposition that this country needs".

But while he speaks of revival, his party have so far failed to show any noticeable growth in support and after being obliterated at the polls at the 2015 general election, the open wounds are still weeping.

Yet his party are now the only one to sit

firmly in the centre ground – so recently beloved by the floating voter.

Labour, under Jeremy Corbyn has deserted the site of their triple election successes under Tony Blair, while Brexit and Theresa May have seen the Conservatives take a sideways step back to their more traditional spot on the right.

The upshot is that many voters are finding themselves cast adrift from their preferred political positions. Where, the big question is, will they end up?

The natural answer was normally the Lib Dems. The reality now is that they have become a bit-part player in national politics.

Once the main opposition in many constituencies in Kent and the county council, today they are, in the eyes of many, something of a damaged brand; a result of Nick Clegg's 'we're different' claims before joining the Tories in power in a coalition and reversing decisions such as university fees. After the 2015 election they emerged with a mere eight MPs.

Tim Farron's profile has been modest too – but, speaking exclusively to KoS this week, he insists it's all to play for.

"We are winning votes, if you look at local elections since June we have a 100 per cent defence record and have made 12 gains and done so from the Conservatives, Labour and Ukip and our membership is stronger than it's been any time this century," he said.

"But we've got a Conservative government doing essentially what they want because the opposition is so non-existent, so we will step in and be that opposition."



CALL: The Liberal Democrat leader is convinced his party offers a genuine alternative



ELECTION: The 2015 general election was one to forget. Nick Clegg resigned after his party returned just eight MPs and left Tim Farron, inset, to pick up the pieces of a party in crisis

"Our job has been to rebuild from what was a very tough result for us in the last election and there's a long way to go but we're getting there, we're making gains and it's clear we've turned a corner.

"We think business matters, the way to make the world work is not pure socialism, we think entrepreneurship is good.

"Clearly Labour have no economic plan but we do. We trusted the British people in the referendum but we need to get the best deals as pos-

sible, particularly for Kent with regards to migration and freedom of movement, and whether we have to pay tax on exports and imports.

"No bureaucrat has the right to impose what they think is the best deal, and it would be wrong for the public to simply be told what they are getting.

"The British people need to have their say here, just as they did about voting in or out."

One of the few areas the party does seem to have significant support is Maidstone, and the

Boundary Commission's proposals to reshuffle constituencies throughout the UK, and make the county town a more compact, urbanised seat, could benefit the Lib Dems, Mr Farron said.

"Across the country the boundary changes look like they might actually help us, and Maidstone is much more likely to be an opportunity for the Lib Dems than it is at the moment.

"But I have to say the way they have been done is massively anti-democratic and the electorate figures are several years out of date.

"The motivation behind it, clearly, is to advantage the Conservatives and I would appeal to Theresa May to look very closely at this."

The scale of the rebuild on Mr Farron's hands cannot be overstated.

His predecessor seemed to become immensely popular overnight following the live televised debates of 2010 as Cleggmania swept across the nation.

His appeal was particularly strong with the younger generation, who appeared won over by his promise not to increase tuition fees at universities.

However, a swift U-turn and a rise in fees to £9,000 a year followed, condemning hundreds of thousands of students to a lifetime of debt.

Dropping from 57 seats to just eight was an emphatic indictment of how the public responded to Mr Clegg's lies, and the Lib Dems were pretty much at rock bottom.

However, Mr Farron insists frustrated Remain voters in this year's EU Referendum in particular can now look at the party as one that is progressive and looking to the future, rather than mistakes of the past.

"I voted against [the tuition fee rise] because I believe if you make a promise you need to keep it," he admitted.

"Sometimes compromise is what you've got to do, but I don't underestimate the impact that has had on our performance in the last five years. Though the fact I am now leader, and I was against it, makes a difference.

"If you look at the figures, we've had a vast increase in membership since the referendum

and of those new members almost 50 per cent are under 30.

"So I think people understand it happened, it was unfortunate, but young people want a strong opposition which Labour isn't providing, and they can see we're the only ones with a plan."

The recent turnaround for the Lib Dems is certainly a step in the right direction, but some serious momentum is needed if they are to mount a genuine challenge for seats in Kent to help claim a Commons majority.

Mission impossible, many would suggest.

Mr Farron has previously suggested a breakaway centre-left party could be on the cards, and was this week coy on whether such discussions have taken place, but did admit his party was open for anyone wanting to challenge the Tories.

He echoed comments made to KoS by former Folkestone councillor Lynne Beaumont that even disillusioned liberal Conservatives could defect, though these were laughed off by Dover MP Charlie Elphicke.

"Observing people in the Labour Party, I regret the position they are in because it's a tragedy for British democracy and people who have given their lives to the movement," Mr Farron said.

"My job is not to be a home-wrecker, but to build ambitiously, maybe audaciously, a strong opposition to the Conservatives, and that would mean we are potentially a home to people of other parties.

"There are plenty of people in the Conservative party who support business and want to maintain what is becoming a narrowing relationship with Europe.

"We will be all ears but it's important to be respectful and you don't achieve success in government by grandstanding over their grief.

"We will be the open, united opposition that this country needs."

Still campaigning hard for membership within the European Union, or at least the best possible deal in terms of trade and movement of

Continued on page 16

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Continued from page 15

people, Mr Farron is also passionate about the refugee crisis.

Previous comments about it being a humanitarian issue first, and security issue second, are commendable, but for the people of Kent, it is easy for an MP, whose constituency in Westmorland and Lonsdale is some way off the frontline, to make idealistic comments.

Kent County Council, currently caring for 1,400 young migrants, said last week the government's current voluntary dispersal system wasn't working and that a mandatory arrangement needed to be put in place imminently to ease the strain on foster carers, social workers, school places, accommodation and healthcare.

However, Mr Farron claims he is well aware of the scale of crisis, and that more needs to be done to support not just the refugees themselves, but also those looking after them in the county and beyond.

"The government needs to take control," he said. "What we have seen both when this began and as it got worse is a government that has turned its back on both [the refugees] and people in Britain who have been doing so much to help them. The pressure put on Kent has been immense because this government has failed to provide both the leadership and resources so that others take their fair share."

"I've visited reception centres in Kent and seen the great work that goes on and they are overwhelmed with compassion."

"If you live in and around where these people are fleeing death, the pressure on communities is so much greater, and we must stand with them and make sure we don't just let the likes of Italy and Greece, who are struggling enough, have to cope with the lion's share."

"If you don't offer that support, people's compassion begins to get worn down."

"I think most local authorities are prepared to step forward and take them if they are not being sold a pup and they keep getting resources, rather than it just being a bung to look after someone for six months."

"For the first few years, of course, these people

SPLIT: Jeremy Corbyn has divided Labour's supporter base and Tim Farron is looking to win some of them to the Lib Dems



cost money, but we see now from people that have arrived in the past, they work in all areas, running businesses, creating jobs, so they have paid that investment back dozens of times over.

"Helping these people, spending that money now and supporting them will pay dividends."

The debate around grammar schools has again reared its head this week, and Mr Farron was quick to reiterate his stance that more such schools, as planned by the prime minister, would harm the education of thousands of young people in the county.

He said: "It's massively important for the children of Kent that we don't get any more because the

evidence is incredibly clear that for every child that gets into a grammar school, there are half a dozen relegated to the second division of education."

"That's not fair for any child. The test locks in their destination at a young age and squanders the talent of the overall majority of young people coming through."

"I understand, broadly speaking, they are popular with people who went to them [though former grammar pupil Mr Corbyn slammed the system in the Commons this week], but for me that's equivalent to someone who is 80 and smokes 50 cigarettes a day saying 'it hasn't done me any harm'. You are the exception that proves the rule."



"If you want our young people to do the best they can, you make sure all our schools do well and telling them they are second best at 10 or 11 is not the way you do it."

He also sided with campaign groups like SOS Kent which opposes the 3,600-lorry park earmarked for Stanford, and criticised the government's methods in delivering the multi-million pound project, claiming it looks "a rushed attempt at a quick fix".

The 46-year-old added: "There needs to be a longer term plan. It's such an enormous challenge and if you are not careful it could get worse. I'm an outsider looking in and I suspect that's the danger, that it happens too much and there's not enough listening to local people."

"Kent is the gateway to the rest of the world and therefore it's all the more important you should support the local communities and make sure they are not undermined."

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Drug deaths reach a new high

Figures released by the Office for National Statistics reveal the number of those dying through the misuse of drugs is on the rise in the county. So just how can this relentless problem ever be tackled?

By Simon Allin

simon.allin@archant.co.uk

MPs have called for greater action to tackle drug misuse after deaths in Kent surged between 2013 and 2015.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed the number of deaths in the county were 189 for Kent as a whole between 2013 and 2015, up from 139 in 2012 to 2014.

Every district except Dover witnessed a rise in fatalities, with Thanet and Maidstone recording the highest number of deaths (26), followed by Swale (24) and Canterbury (22).

The rise in the mortality rate mirrors the national trend, with deaths from drug poisoning in England and Wales hitting a record 3,674 - 43.8 deaths per million people.

Several factors could lie behind the rise, including the increasing purity of the drugs and the fact that heroin users are older and more likely to suffer from health problems such as lung disease and hepatitis.

But opinion differs regarding the solutions, with tougher sentencing for offenders, better education for youngsters and a greater focus on rehabilitation among the approaches to prevention.

Thanet North Conservative MP Sir Roger Gale called for a tougher line on drug pushers.

"I would lock them up and throw away the key," he said. "It is a vile business and there are all sorts of other crimes related to it."

"The problem I think we have is that there are people who sell drugs but these are small fry, and when they are caught the drug gangs in London just send someone to take their place."

"Getting treatment for addiction is quite difficult," he added. "The case that I have made over and over is that it is always virtually impossible until the user decides they need to be treated. When they do, we have to be ready to move fast."

"It is a disease. People blame the user and say 'it is your fault'. In a sense it is, in that you decide to take it, but once you become an addict it becomes a disease. We need to treat it medically."

Deaths linked to new psychoactive substances - formerly known as legal highs - have increased sharply in England and Wales, with 114 recorded last year.

Canterbury Tory MP Julian Brazier has campaigned to protect communities from these substances, and a nationwide ban came into force in May.

He told KoS: "The government has made the necessary changes and the figures should start to go down. But a life lost to drugs is another person lost forever, and we need to do all we can to bear down on this."

"I think we have to consider further measures. I have always been a supporter of a tough line on drugs."

"I think the Scandinavian approach is very good. People should be given chances for rehab, but on the basis that they keep it up."

"I would say let's tighten up on drugs and see what the new legislation does."

The Conservative MP for South Thanet, Craig Mackinlay, described tackling drug mis-



CRISIS: A rise in the use of legal highs has contributed to the drug situation across the UK while many say the stigma of drug use is preventing people seeking support and treatment

“It’s a difficult balancing act. Rehabilitation is fundamental and schools could play a bigger role than they do now...”

Craig Mackinlay,
Conservative MP, South Thanet

use as “a difficult balancing act”.

“Rehabilitation is fundamental and schools could play a bigger role than they do now,” he added.

“I am concerned about the approach taken by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service regarding enforcement, and I think it is now feeding through.

“Increasingly, residents are complaining about cannabis and starter drug use. I am regularly talking to the police about anti-social behaviour issues, and they are bound up with drug use.

“We now have a ban on ‘legal highs’ and I am hoping that will pay some dividends. We may see the fruits of that legislation – but there is also the problem of internet supply, often from abroad.”

Tackling organised gangs involved in the illegal drugs trade is one of Kent Police’s main priorities, and in August last year Operation Jupiter was set up to crack down on the criminals.

Superintendent Simon Thompson said: “We tackle the activities of organised crime groups, who seek to generate huge rewards from the illicit drug markets, and can cause serious harm to individuals and communities.

“We have been working in partnership with Public Health and NHS England to provide drug testing on arrest within all of the custody suites across Kent. Drug testing is a powerful tool for identifying drug-misusing offenders.

“A positive drug test for heroin, crack or cocaine use is a valuable gateway to ensure the

offender can access treatment and other support to tackle their drug-related offending.

“Effective prevention, enforcement and high quality treatment are only aspects of a successful strategy. For people to live well and longer, police, partners and communities must work together to promote earlier identification, self-referral and treatment, which would improve life expectancy and quality of life.”

Kent County Council combats drug misuse through a multi-agency panel that includes drug treatment providers such as Turning Point, Change, Grow, Live and Addaction.

Andy Power, senior operations manager for substance misuse at Turning Point, works across East Kent and Medway.

The organisation offers a number of services aimed at tackling misuse, such as patient detox and counselling sessions with psychiatrists.

“Drug misuse is a symptom of other problems,” he said. “We can treat it, but there is something behind it that needs to be worked on.

“We work with our partners to give people hope, and with universities and colleges so there is some ray of light at the end of the tunnel.

“We also have peer mentors – people who have already been through it and show that it is possible to overcome your problems.”

Mr Power added that the social deprivation in places like Thanet was one of the main factors behind drug problems.

“Thanet has some of the most deprived wards in the country. Liver disease cases are going up in Thanet, whereas in most places they are going down.

“There is an awful lot of investment going into some parts of Thanet, but we need to ensure the other parts get the support they need.”

He explained that many of the deaths recently recorded are a result of opiate users, who have been living longer and dying of related conditions.

“We have about 60 or 70 people over 70 being treated for opiate problems, which is unusual. It is not something you used to see.

“But new psychoactive substances [legal

highs] are having a massive impact on younger people.”

Mr Power added that changing society’s attitudes towards users and becoming more accepting of drug problems is crucial to tackling the problem.

“Negative attitudes meant that people were not prepared to seek treatment because of the stigma, and that has made things worse,” he explained.

“Alcohol is the hidden problem because it is a socially acceptable drug and we use it at all events. The level of harm it can do is unbelievable.

“People with drug problems are part of society and we should not be excluding them.”

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Gurkhas continue to keep peace in Kabul

Troops from barracks in Folkestone have swapped Kent coast for Afghanistan as part of a long-running operation

By Chris Britcher

chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

GURKHAS from the county are continuing its operations in Afghanistan in their role of providing security for Nato advisors across Kabul City.

Sent out in April, the second battalion of the Royal Gurkha Rifles (2RGR) have worked on a variety of different projects and will continue to maintain a presence until the end of the year.

And, as our pictures show, it is all a very long way and a very different type of life and environment than what they are used to stationed at Shorncliffe Barracks in Folkestone.

Roles have included working at Kabul's international airport to provide security for the UK's aviation detachment of Puma helicopters, where they have worked alongside C (Tamandu) Company's machine guns platoon.

Explains Sgt Dikbahadur Tumkhewa Limbu, from C Company, 2RGR: "The UK aviation detachment provide movement and medical evacuation services to UK and Nato personnel within Kabul. Though small in size, the helicopters provide crucial support to enable the on-going advise and assist mission in Afghanistan."

"Working side-by-side with the



DANGEROUS: Afghanistan still remains a troubled area and troops have to take considerable care against insurgents

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Royal Air Force (RAF) has been a new and enlightening experience. The Gurkhas have forged a close friendship with them in the short time they've had together. It has already been a tour of forming multinational friendships. At Kabul International Airport, the Gurkhas collaborate on a day-to-day basis, not only with Afghans, but with US, Australian, Turkish and Azerbaijani soldiers supporting the Nato mission.

"While this is definitely a less 'war-like' tour than previous ones, the threat is still high and real; with bangs of not-so-far dis-

tance explosions heard from time to time. Hence the Gurkhas keep their skills razor sharp with frequent drills and rehearsals to ensure that they are professional and focused should anything go wrong."

Lt Will Patrick, of Company C of the 2RGR, added: "For those who were in Kabul in 2002, the operating environment of the capital city is almost unrecognisable. Modern Kabul is a sprawling, urbanised and highly populated city, whose skyline is punctuated by concrete high-rise towers. At night, wedding halls in the north-

west are lit up to impressive effect, more reminiscent of Las Vegas than the Afghanistan that veterans may recognise. However, the infrastructural and financial advances of the city belie the greatest constant; the existential threat posed by motivated and determined insurgents."

Other roles include supporting and advising the training of Afghan National Army officer cadets.

Darulaman training area lies on the edge of a mountain range overlooking Kabul City. The Gurkha's task was to protect the



TOGETHER: Gurkhas have joined forces with local and other nationalities

mentors throughout the training exercise. Although it is a military training area, there is a persistent threat to be aware of. While the streets of Afghanistan are no

longer as perilous as once they were, it is only through the continued hard work and vigilance by the likes of Kent's Gurkhas that continues.



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£200m yacht visit creates waves

Words and pictures: James Heming

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk



IT'S more often spotted sailing through waters off the coast of the world's top resorts such as Monaco, Malibu and Honolulu. But last weekend one of the world's most expensive yachts dropped anchor off the Kent coast.

Known as Motor Yacht A, the sleek, submarine-like design, was visible for miles around after stopping off the Thanet coast.

Valued at around a little over £200 million, the yacht is be-

lieved to still be owned by the Russian billionaire Andre Melnichenko.

Anchored off Palm Bay, near Margate, it could be seen along the north Kent coast across the weekend.

Guests were seen unloading jet skis in the water as enjoyed the September sunshine.

It is believed the billionaire put the vessel – which features three swimming pools – up for sale earlier this year.

He has decided to upgrade to

what is believed to be the single biggest luxury yacht in the world – Sailing Yacht A which cost a staggering £313m to build and is still under going tests in dry dock.

The craft seen off Kent was 390ft long and is the 21st largest super yacht in the world.

Believed to have bomb-proof glass, a helipad, seven luxurious cabins and space for 14 guests and just over 40 crew, it has a top speed of around 26mph and a range of

some 6,500 nautical miles.

Other exotic destinations it has been seen sailing include the likes of Puerto Rico, Thailand and Turkey.

Mr Melnichenko is known to entertain guests with lavish parties on board, that have included performances from the likes of Lenny Kravitz and rapper Snoopy Dogg.

With a personal fortune said to comfortably eclipse £7 billion, he made his money in the mining, energy and banking sectors.



It is believed he also owns a sprawling estate near Ascot, a penthouse in New York and a villa in the French Riviera. He also has a customised Boeing 737 private jet.

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Aviator's legend takes off again

Adele Couchman looks at the remarkable campaign which this weekend culminates in the unveiling of a statue to honour Amy Johnson, a pioneering pilot who died off the Kent coast during the war...

PIONEERING pilot Amy Johnson this weekend became a permanent fixture on Herne Bay seafront after campaigners finally unveiled a statue in her memory.

The £21,000 bronze piece was due to be unveiled on Saturday after an 18 month campaign for a monument to commemorate the record-breaking pilot who died serving her country off the shores of the seaside town in January 1941.

Prince Michael of Kent and pilot Tracey Curtis Taylor were due to be in attendance with the statue stood between the bandstand and the pier on the seafront.

Campaign organiser Jane Priston hopes it will inspire and educate the next generation of aviators as well as keep the iconic pilot's memory alive.

The monument features the heroine wearing 1930s flying clothes of jodhpurs, shirt and tie, a flying jacket, and helmet and goggles.

Ms Priston, who lives in the town, decided to set up the Amy Johnson project after reading about the famous aviator in a biography.

To her astonishment, she found there was no landmark to commemorate the heroine who crashed off the coast 75 years ago.

She explains: "Amy is an incredible woman, and was a significant part of British history in aviation society and for women."

"In 1930s England, Amy should have been in a kitchen – not flying a plane. But like so many other women she is forgotten about in history books, despite being one of the best pilots we ever had."

"After learning about her achievements I wanted to raise her profile and keep her memory alive. The statue will bring something visible and permanent to her memory, and something I really hope people will stop to look at and take an interest in."



REMEMBERED: Amy Johnson statue and right, (courtesy RAF Museum)

Most notably, Britain's most famous aviatrix is remembered for being the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia.

Her first important achievement, however, was to qualify as the first British-trained woman ground engineer – the only woman in the world to do so at that time.

Her flying career began at the London Aeroplane Club in the winter of 1928-29 and her hobby soon became an all-consuming determination to prove that women could be as competent as men in a male dominated field.

She later turned her attention to business ventures, journalism and fashion after it became harder to break records. She modelled clothes

for Elsa Schiaparelli and created her own travelling bag, until the outbreak of the war in 1939 made her reconsider her public role.

During the Second World War, the pilot then joined the Air Transport Auxiliary and ferried aircraft from factory airstrips to RAF bases.

It was on one of these routine flights on Sunday, January 5, 1941 that she met her tragic end, crashing into the Thames Estuary where her body has never been recovered.

Volunteers from the Canterbury Divers have since been searching for the wreckage of her aeroplane and her final resting place. They are looking at a possible site 12 miles off the Herne Bay coast called Tizard Bank.



Explains Chris Weaver, chairman of Canterbury Divers: "Amy was a great figurehead and full of optimism. As such a great woman finding the plane gives us a great challenge to work towards finding the wreckage – it is a cause and a reason for us to go out and use our training."

Although the divers remain hopeful they will one day find the remains of the tragedy, Mr Weaver admits discovering her plane remains a major challenge due to the dangers of currents and poor visibility around the area.

Pilot Tracey Curtis Taylor, who was part of the unveiling has, herself, been described as a "modern day Amy".

The British adventurer completed an epic 14,600-nautical mile flight from the UK to Australia in a vintage open cockpit bi-plane – retracing Amy Johnson's 1930 flight in a Gipsy Moth.

Speaking of the aviator's expedition which started in October 2015, statue campaign chief Jane Priston said: "Tracey was not only recreating Amy's epic Australia flight and bringing her back to life, but also reaching out to young girls to show that aviation is a career they can achieve."

"Her flight was about breaking down stereotypes and encouraging women to take brave choices."

During the making of the statue, the Amy Johnson Project organiser has been working on a film with the Women's Engineering Society to encourage young people into the profession.

The film hopes to roll out across schools from next year, using Amy Johnson's story as an inspiration to show children, especially girls, the prospects engineering can bring despite being a challenging subject.

The pioneer's achievements on the 75th anniversary of her death are also being celebrated in her hometown of Hull, where she grew up with three sisters and her father ran a fish export and import business.

Professor Stephanie Haywood from the school of engineering at the University of Hull, explains why the former understated middle-class typist remains a figurehead for young girls breaking into engineering – where the number of women in the profession still remains incredibly low.

She explains: "Amy was a pioneer not just in flying, but also the first woman to gain a ground engineering sea licence."

She was also an interesting character – not only did she set records; she was very glamorous and displayed a different side to engineering.

"It's important we remember women who did stuff rather than just complaining about them being left out, and Amy should have more prominence so both boys and girls can see engineering as a career."

The bronze statue's unveiling is thanks to the fundraising efforts of local groups, businesses and individuals from Herne Bay, whose combined efforts raised £30,000 to cover the costs of the unveiling event, planning applications, an information board and the statue itself.



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BATON: Westerham's Nigel Farage congratulates Diane James after she was confirmed on Friday afternoon as the new leader of Ukip during its national conference in Bournemouth

Dawn of a new era for Ukip as James replaces Farage as leader

Tom Pyman on how a former Kent schoolgirl will look to shape the party as it stands at crossroads...

THE new leader of Ukip issued a warning to the prime minister to "get on with" negotiating Britain's exit from the European Union as she swept to victory at the party's conference in Bournemouth this week.

A south east MEP and former Kent schoolgirl, Diane James was the frontrunner and bookies' favourite throughout the campaign, and comfortably beat off her leadership rivals to secure the top job with 8,451 votes – almost half of the total cast.

She will replace Nigel Farage, who lives in Westerham, after he stepped down "to get his life back" following the Brexit vote, for which many gave him significant credit, in June.

Educated at Rochester Grammar School, Ms James then worked in the healthcare sector for more than 30 years, setting up her own international consultancy business.

Her career then switched to politics, as she worked as a councillor, first standing as an independent before joining Ukip in 2011.

She was elected to the European Parliament in 2014 and is the party's current home affairs spokesperson, quickly developing a strong reputation, with the potential to fill the large shoes of Mr Farage whenever he did finally relinquish his role at the head of the Eurosceptic party.

Taking to the stage on Friday afternoon, she said: "I still haven't quite come to grips with it."

"I'm still pinching myself but I'm just immensely grateful for what you

have done and what you have bestowed on me."

The new leader said the party had "moved mountains on the political landscape" and was the "change movement of the United Kingdom".

Ms James insisted that Brexit must mean "100 per cent EU exit", and said Ukip's "people's army" must keep up the pressure on Theresa May's government.

She said: "And Mrs May: from one grammar school girl to another, stop the faff, stop the fudge and the farce, get on with it – evoke Article 50 and give Ukip the best Christmas present we could ever have; 2016, December 25."

As she took to the stage to take over from Mr Farage as the party's new leader, Ms James paid tribute to the work of her predecessor.

But she stressed that she must be allowed to lead the party in her own way, saying she would not be a "Nigel-like, not even Nigel-lite".

Paying tribute to Mr Farage, she said he had "given up decades, sacrificed a huge amount" and will be "a stalwart proponent and supporter of Brexit in making sure it is delivered".

She added: "The European Union referendum and the outcome meant that Britain, or the United Kingdom, however you want to style it, is embarking on a new era, and just is the same for our party – the United Kingdom Independence Party."

"I am not Nigel-like, I am not even Nigel-lite. I'll never ever pretend to be so."

"What I will be doing is stepping into his leadership shoes, but I will be doing everything to achieve the po-

"I still haven't quite come to grips with it. I'm just immensely grateful for what you have done and what you have bestowed on me"

Diane James,
Leader of Ukip

litical success that he's handing over to me."

Prior to the announcement, Mr Farage warned supporters of his party it must be "healthy and strong" to deliver Brexit as he gave his final speech as leader.

Taking to the stage to a wave of cheers, Mr Farage promised "not to meddle" when the new leader takes up the post.

He said: "We can be very proud of the fact that we won the war but we now must win the peace."

"And the only mechanism to put pressure on the government to keep the debate live and to make sure that those 17 million people get what they voted for is for Ukip to be healthy and for Ukip to strong."

Ukip has been plagued by infighting and factionalism, and a number of activists and party officials have recently left the party to join the Conservatives.



As a string of prominent party members warned that Ukip faced a battle for its very survival, Mr Farage hit out at party figures who he said are using Ukip purely to further their own political careers.

He said: "We have to change our management structures, and we have to guard – because one of the problems of success is that it brings people into the party who, perhaps, don't do it for altruistic aims for the country or its people but perhaps are more motivated by their own professional careers in politics."

But he stressed that Ukip remains at heart united, and said it could sweep up a lot of support from disaffected Labour voters and Tories who may become disillusioned with the Brexit terms negotiated.

He said Ukip has "changed the centre of gravity in British politics" and that many of their policies, such as grammar schools, have been taken up.

He said: "Not only are there millions of people out there who feel loyal to us, but I don't think that the harvest of votes that we could potentially get from the Labour Party has really even started yet."

"And believe me, if Brexit doesn't mean Brexit then, I think, there will be a very large number of Conservatives who will say there is only one party we can support."

Dartford family lawyer Elizabeth Jones came in fifth place, behind Phillip Broughton, Bill Etheridge and Lisa Duffy.

Ukip has become the main party of opposition in Kent in recent years, holding the in power Conservatives to account on the county council, and gaining control of its first, and only, council in the country in Thanet last year.

Its leader, Chris Wells, told KoS: "It will be a challenge because for an awful lot of people Ukip is synonymous with Nigel Farage, so it's a daunting task and she'll need our support."

"But she was probably the best candidate, so I am pleased."

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By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

CAMPAIGNERS in Sevenoaks are celebrating after Theresa May's announcement to lift the ban on grammar schools opened the door to a much sought-after annexe for boys in the district.

Last year, then-education secretary Nicky Morgan caused a stir by giving the green light to plans for an annexe for girls in Sevenoaks, an extension of the Weald of Kent Grammar School in Tonbridge.

The Sevenoaks Grammar School Campaign welcomed that decision 12 months ago, as it was the only district in the county without access to selective education, but has been pushing for a similar facility for boys on the same site, which now appears to be very much on the table.

Founder Andrew Shilling said: "The proposed removal of the ban on new grammar schools is excellent

news for Sevenoaks parents.

"This is because the lifting of the ban will, for the first time, permit grammar school places to be provided for the boys in our town, rather than just places for the girls.

"Weald of Kent Grammar School will now be able to create a co-educational, stand alone, grammar school in Sevenoaks without the need to follow the same curriculum, share the same facilities, follow the same admissions policy, and use the same teaching staff, as the parent school in Tonbridge.

"Over time this should enable the Sevenoaks grammar school to develop its own distinct identity and ethos, and to become one of the few co-educational grammar schools in Kent serving its local community.

"There however remains a formidable legal hurdle to the removal of the grammar school ban, namely The House Of Lords where Labour and Liberal Democrat peers outnumber Conservatives peers, and have indicated that they will block this law change.

"To overcome this block, the removal of the ban will need to be included in the Conservative party manifesto at the next general election, and the Conservatives will then need to win the election and form the next government.

"I therefore hope that Theresa May will call an early general election and then win it, because then we would quickly get our Sevenoaks grammar school for boys and girls, and not just for girls."

The announcement coincided with the beginning of work on the site for the girls' school, where Kent County Council leader Paul Carter was in attendance.

"We are extremely proud to be the first local authority in the UK to have relentlessly pursued this ambition," he said. "This is not just a great day for education in Kent but the future of grammar school education across the country."



RIP: The late Mike O'Brien

Education chiefs change after death of council's Mike O'Brien

MEDWAY Council has appointed a new cabinet member to oversee education provision across the unitary authority following the death of long-standing councillor Mike O'Brien earlier this month.

He had been portfolio holder for children's services for the last three years. Now the role will be taken over by Andrew Mackness.

But it is a newcomer to the cabinet, Martin Potter, who will oversee the educational attainment and attainment strand.

That includes primary and secondary education and school services. Medway has suffered

from poor results in its primary sector, and the focus must be on transforming its fortunes.

Leader of Medway Council Alan Jarrett said: "Following the sad news of Mike O'Brien, I have appointed Andrew Mackness to work on the children's services portfolio. Together with Martin Potter, I am confident the good work in this area will continue."

Conservative Cllr O'Brien passed away on September 8 after a long fight against cancer.

He received tributes from both colleagues and across the political divide.

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May's grammar plans would widen divide between children, says union

Fears grow that more selective schools would give those that fail 11-plus test a "second rate education"

TEACHERS across the county fear more children will suffer a "second rate education" after Theresa May last week announced plans to introduce a new wave of grammar schools.

The controversial selective system, which critics say unfairly brands children a failure should they not pass the 11-plus test at the end of primary school, has been banned from opening new schools of that kind since 1998.

But the prime minister now appears to intend to kickstart the biggest shake-up of education in England in decades by unveiling a comprehensive package of measures to radically increase the number of good school places – in order to ensure that all children have the best possible start in life.

"We are going to build a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few," Mrs May said.

"A fundamental part of that is having schools that give every child the best start in life, regardless of their background.

"For too long we have tolerated a system that contains an arbitrary rule preventing selective schools from being established – sacrificing children's potential because of dogma and ideology.

"The truth is that we already have selection in our school system – and its selection by house price, selection by wealth. That is simply unfair.

"That is why I am announcing an ambitious package of education reforms to ensure that every child has the chance to go to a good school.

"As well as allowing new selective schools we will bring forward a new requirement that means universities who want to charge higher fees will be required to establish a new school or sponsor an existing underperforming school.

"This is about being unapologetic for our belief in social mobility and making this country a true meritocracy – a country that works for everyone."

That aim of social mobility, shared by Kent County Council, will be achieved, the prime minister says, by requiring new or expanding grammars to take a proportion of pupils from lower income households, so that selective education is not reserved for those with the means to move into a catchment area or pay for tuition to pass the test.

Alternatively, the measures would require such schools to establish a new, high quality, non-selective free school, set up or sponsor a primary feeder school in an area with a high density of lower income households or sponsor a currently underper-

“ We have research to show when you cream off the top of academic students, you end up with those that are left receiving a second class education...”

Christine Dickinson,
National Union of Teachers

forming non-selective academy.

Yet the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in Kent believes the prime minister's measures to increase social mobility will fail, and the current gap between the quality of education received across the county will increase.

"We have a lot of evidence and research to show that when you cream off the top of academic students, you end up with those that are left receiving a second class education," divisional secretary Christine Dickinson told KoS.

"I don't think the quotas Mrs May wants to put in place will make any kind of difference.

"The whole system is totally wrong for a child's development because they develop in different ways.

"Even within a calendar year, some younger children will be behind at certain point, so I think it's wrong."

Sir Michael Wilshaw, the government's outgoing chief inspector of schools, also revealed concerns at the London Councils education conference, when he said: "If grammar schools are the great answer, why aren't there more of them in London?"

"If they are such a good thing for poor children, then why are poor children here in the capital doing so much better than their counterparts in those parts of the country that operate selection?"

"I appreciate that many grammar schools do a fine job in equipping their students with an excellent education.

"But we all know that their record of admitting children from non-middle-class backgrounds is pretty woeful."

Joanne Bartley, of the Kent Education Network, a group opposed to selective education, also told us a selective system would harm the development of thousands of children across the county.

"The more experienced teachers go to grammar schools and we know that only one in four non-selectives are rated 'outstanding' and



CONTROVERSIAL: Theresa May's plans for more grammars have been slammed and (inset) Sir Michael Wilshaw

many 'requires improvement'.

"So many people, including teachers, are joining our organisation because they are in the thick of it and they can see that the 11-plus just isn't helping the right children.

"There are children attending non-selectives who are just as clever as those at grammars but didn't benefit from having tutors or test papers waved in front of their face by their parents and I think that's what Sir Michael was talking about – it's good to see someone like him echoing our campaign.

"How much your parents care about education has an effect – some will apply and push for it early on because they think a grammar education is better for their child.

"But for me there needs to be a better plan for getting teachers to go to



the non-selective schools because at the moment, they're not."

Home secretary Amber Rudd, meanwhile, has insisted the plans would help boost choice for parents.

Asked on BBC One's Andrew Marr Show if she was a grammar school "enthusiast", she replied: "Absolutely an enthusiast but not going back to the Fifties.

"Having a variety that we're having now where parents have a choice of schools.

"Arts schools, music schools and yes selective."

She added it was "absolutely not" the case that the expansion of selective education would lead to a new generation of "sheep and goats" as children are separated.



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SMART: A Margate academy came in for a flurry of criticism last week, but the consensus is that an enforced uniform policy can lead directly to improved performance in the classroom

How uniform rules can underpin a push to improve school standards

Emily King examines the issues around the ever thorny topic of just why a uniform can make a difference

HEAD teachers and union representatives across the county have spoken out in support of the new head teacher of a Margate secondary who earlier this month created national headlines for clamping down on flouting school uniform regulations.

Some 50 pupils were told they could not enter when they returned to the Hartsdown Academy after the summer break, causing a storm of protest from parents.

Once again, it raised the issue of the rights and wrongs of a school uniform and just why so many senior education professionals remain convinced it is a key part of reinforcing the rules of the school and of enhancing a sense of both pride and community in them.

But why does a pair of trainers or a hoodie – instead of smart shoes or a blazer – have an impact?

Kim Johnson is head teacher of Bradfields Academy in Chatham and national president of school leaders' union the National Association of Head Teachers.

He explained: "School uniforms are an easy way to level the playing field for students when they walk through the school gates.

"They create a sense of equality, so that no matter the background or personal circumstances of the student, they can learn and socialise with their peers on equal terms.

"A school's uniform code also teaches students that, just as there

"It is an easy way to level the playing field for students when they walk through the gates – they create a sense of equality..."

Kim Johnson,
National president of NAHT

are in life, there are school rules that should be adhered to for the collective wellbeing of everyone in the school community.

"It's about striking the right balance between a person's rights and their responsibilities. It's a young person's right to attend school and be educated – it is their responsibility to act respectfully to the people around them and show tolerance and understanding.

"Schools also need to understand that there is a balance to strike. The cost of uniform, including various sports kits, adds up quickly, so it's important that a school's uniform is affordable, and that measures are in place to assist disadvantaged families.

"Some steps schools can take include choosing uniforms widely available on the high street, making school logos available as sew-on patches, and having a plain sports kit

that can be used for different sports. Schools should be using a range of different suppliers to avoid single outlets having a monopoly that allows them to raise prices."

For many schools, the introduction of a zero-tolerance approach to school uniform oversights can hammer home the message effectively. But, more significantly, it can also be a key part of an overhaul of a school strategy designed to tackle both discipline and performance levels.

This was behind Matthew Tate's decision as the new head of Margate's Hartsdown Academy.

Parents were informed before the school break and told that it signalled a fresh approach.

Executive head teacher of the Coastal Academies Trust, which runs Hartsdown, Paul Luxmoore said that though it is early days they have seen that "behaviour has improved because students know that Matthew will enforce rules and means what he says".

Both he and Mr Tate have made no secret that the reinforced uniform policy is to "better the reputation" of the school.

"Margate is known for high unemployment and poverty," explained Mr Luxmoore. "Hartsdown Academy is known as having lots of deprived children and low academic standards. We think pupils are sick of being seen as the poor children of Thanet. They have high aspirations and want to do well, and Matthew's expectations of perfect uniforms is the beginning of



SUPPORT: John McParland is head of Ashford's John Wallis Academy

bringing the school's reputation and standards up.

"We want to be a school that parents can be proud of sending their children to.

"I've had several parents tell me how pleased they are that they can see that actually we want to be different."

John McParland is a man who is well versed in the positive reinforcement a uniform policy can bring.

As head of the John Wallis Academy in Ashford, he has spearheaded a remarkable transformation in its rep-

utation and the performance of its students.

He admits when he introduced a tough implementation of uniform codes he faced issues but said the benefits are now there to see.

He told us: "I believe a school uniform is a powerful tool in establishing a distinctive identity for a school community and reflects the ethos of the school giving pupils a sense of belonging and pride.

"When the John Wallis Academy opened as a new school in 2010 it was a time of transformation and bringing a new uniform was part of that transformation in raising standards and establishing a culture of discipline and compliance with agreed norms.

"We are now in the seventh year as the John Wallis Academy and the pupils wear their uniform with pride and are very happy to belong to the school community.

"I would trust and support the decisions of the principal of Hartsdown Academy.

"A principal creates a culture of high expectations and applies this to students and staff which means establishing a culture of discipline and compliance with sanctions in place for those who fall short. Earning the trust of students gives you the freedom to apply the school rules consistently and fairly.

"For these reasons I believe if a school has a uniform policy then it is very important to enforce the school rules."

EDUCATION FOR KENT

Why choice will only add to the school confusion

Education expert **Peter Read** takes a look at the latest plans to offer even more options to parents in an already crowded county

THE government's new green paper, headed *Schools that Work for Everyone*, does nothing to make sense of the country's fractured education provision, seen at its most prolific in Kent, but instead seeks to increase the kaleidoscope of school types by adding even more variations.

One of its stated aims is the delivery of a diverse school system to enable all children to achieve their potential. Certainly, one can be sure that these proposals will increase diversity.

I do not propose to examine the green paper in depth, but look with bewilderment at proposals to allow faith schools to proliferate and tighten their grip on school admissions; church schools already totalling around a third of the country's total.

The paper explicitly refers to the current large influx of children from Catholic families into the country and county's schools - looking for a Catholic school is one of the driving



factors behind the government proposals - with the Catholic church refusing to open new schools unless they are given control of 100 per cent of the intake, as distinct from the current 50 per cent.

Interestingly, in Poland 89 per cent of children attend secular state schools, with just 11 per cent in the

private Catholic schools, so it is unclear why this should drive English education policy. Surely, it makes no sense to allow more religious segregation at a time when racial and religious tensions are at their greatest in this country for many years?

Much has been written on the bizarre plan to allow new types of



grammar schools to spring up or convert from non-selective schools, apparently without regard to their effect on other schools or on those children left behind, or else to expand using unidentified rules to improve social mobility, so I don't propose to add to it here.

Types of school

One central argument for the new proposals appears to be that this allows even more variety in school structures, as if this is a good thing in itself.

If so, it is one of the strangest education philosophies I have ever come across as parents become ever more confused about the delusional idea



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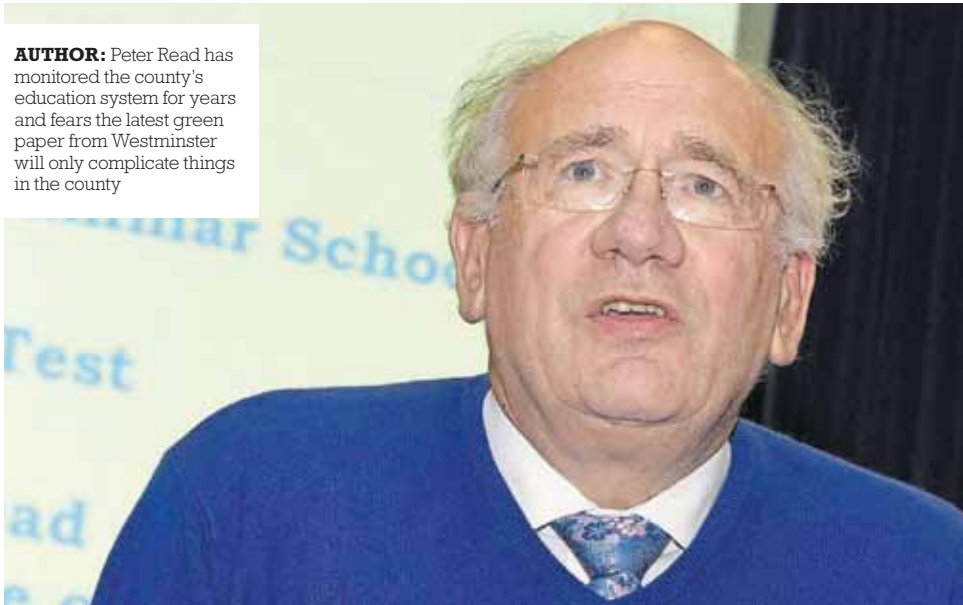
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SCHOOL GUIDE

AUTHOR: Peter Read has monitored the county's education system for years and fears the latest green paper from Westminster will only complicate things in the county



that they have more choice, when in fact it is quite the reverse, with Kent surely already 'leading' the way here. In no particular order, we have: Comprehensive schools and other non-selective schools – some able to recruit up to 20 per cent according to vocational talent or academic ability; schools with grammar streams; grammar schools; super selective and semi-super selective grammar schools; a single sex grammar school annexe being constructed where the

need is for mixed provision; maintained and voluntary aided schools; primary, secondary and all through academies, the latter designed on a mushroom principle with admission at five and 11; sponsored and converter academies; one all through maintained church school with different admission rules for primary and secondary entrance; free schools; a university technical college (UTC) recruiting at age 14 according to the UTC philosophy of choice at this age,

but now trying to ignore this by extending down to age 11 with another mushroom structure; one school with a specialist land based curriculum; infant, junior and primary schools; and mixed, boys and girls schools. There are Church of England, Catholic, evangelical and other faith schools – some able to recruit 100 per cent according to religious criteria, others 50 per cent, plenty with no conditions; oversubscribed schools

and those with vacancies, some of the latter withering on the stem in a highly charged competitive climate; three boarding schools - two grammar academies the other comprehensive with 'military traditions'; multi-academy trusts; stand-alone academy trusts; one 13-18 grammar school structured so that half of its intake comes from private schools, but trying to change to 11-18, against fierce resistance from parents; federations of schools of all shapes and sizes; spe-

cial schools with different specialisations; specialist SEN units attached to mainstream schools and academies, including one grammar school. There are schools classified by Ofsted as 'outstanding' through to those in 'special measures'; schools and 'colleges' with specialisms, some in their titles others not, some significant, others irrelevant – arts, sports, performing arts, science and

Continued on page 34

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EDUCATION FOR KENT

Continued on page 33

technology, technology and learning (!).

We have sponsored academies run by churches, profit making organisations, with names designed to advertise owners (what about the newly named schools company The Goodwin Academy?), grammar schools, other lead schools, universities, Lilac Sky Schools Academy Trust (under notice by government to dispose of all its academies), Ministry of Defence, a London livery company, private schools, some subject to being transferred between trusts.

To these are now to be added new types of academy and free school grammar and faith schools, with others sponsored by private schools and universities, although the Kent experience of the last two groups is certainly mixed, the most disastrous example being that of Dulwich College at Isle of Sheppey.

Parental Choice

One of many popular fallacies is that this diversity offers increased parental choice.

Actually, it does completely the reverse, by severely limiting family choices according to where they live or can afford to live, and what family circumstances are.

Increasingly it reinforces the

reality with schools selecting families through their choices of admission rules, as many parents will know to their cost after setting out on the application path.

One problem is that Kent is still mainly a town and rural county, with no large conurbations (omitting Medway, a completely separate local authority).

Whilst some families in west Kent have a choice of three grammar schools, most have just one unless they wish to travel long distances. It is a minority of families prepared to travel to another town for a non-selective school, so choice of 'suitable' schools can become very limited.

Few families have the opportunity to choose which of the above plethora of types of school would suit them as many appear randomly sprinkled across the county, or where they will be offered a place with the majority of schools oversubscribed, and to find four that suit to go on the application form is, I suspect, a rarity.

But what a task making that choice where it exists, with little guidance to help consider ethos, curriculum, opportunities, performance, Ofsted rating, headteacher style, chances of being offered a place and the many other relevant factors.

Frankly, it is unrealistic, grossly unreasonable, unfair and a process that heavily penalises those families not able to cope with the complexities, or understand the differences – these being the very families supposed to be at the centre of government priorities according to the green paper.

It is ironic that until a few years ago, local authorities were funded to provide an individual advice service on secondary school admissions for families in need of help, but this was removed as not being a priority.

In summary, the green paper recipe is for ever more diversity, partially to deliver greater social mobility, and partly to expand the remit of special interest groups.

All this to be achieved apparently without thought being given to the problems faced by the target groups in accessing these wonders. But I have no doubt that as always, aspiring families will find ways to benefit from the outcomes of the proposals.

■ **Peter Read is a former Gravesend head teacher and education advisor. You can read more about education issues in Kent on his website www.kentadvice.co.uk.**

GREENING DITCHES PARENT GOVERNOR PLANS

EDUCATION secretary Justine Greening is to abandon plans to drop the requirement for parent governors from schools in England.

Ms Greening told MPs this week she did not intend to proceed with controversial proposals by her predecessor Nicky Morgan to give academy trusts the "freedom" not to include parent governors.

Appearing before the Commons education committee, she said the involvement of parents was often crucial to turning round under-performing schools.

"I don't think we should be saying that MATS (multi-academy trusts) don't need to have parents. I think parent governors

play a vital role actually," she said.

"I actually think that part of the way that we can ensure schools that are doing a less good job of delivering for children who are disadvantaged – part of the solution is getting parents more involved.

"We have all seen it as a local MP, often when schools turn around, one of the reasons they have managed to do it is because parents have become more engaged and more invested in the school's success and that has helped build the school up."

Her comments were welcomed by Liberal Democrat education spokesman John Pugh who said: "This will undoubt-

edly be the first of many climbdowns from a secretary of state left to defend the indefensible.

"It should have never reached this stage but I am glad, finally, that the government have seen sense."

Ms Greening told the committee that while she supported Ms Morgan's aim for all state schools in England to become academies, her priority was raising standards in schools that were under-performing.

"I do want to see all schools over time become academies but I think our focus has got to be on the schools that are struggling and not doing well enough for children at the moment," she said.

Call for four-times-a-year fitness checks in nation's schools

Paralympics champion Tanni Grey-Thompson has backed calls for children to undergo regular fitness tests at school.

Not-for-profit firm ukactive and children's coaching company Premier Sport have launched a new scheme called My Personal Best - which sees pupils' fitness levels being measured four times during the school year.

Officials say they would like to see the idea rolled out in schools across the country - something which 11-time Paralympics gold medal winner Baroness Grey-Thompson believes would be a good idea.

The Cardiff-born sports star said: "We know that today's youth are the least active generation ever, so it's vital we intensify efforts to embed a minimum of one hour of physical activity into their daily routines.

"Central to this should be the nationwide roll-out of fitness measurement programmes for primary schoolchildren that are conducted in a way that is fun and enjoyable for kids."

Amid rising obesity levels



among youngsters, a new study by ukactive said that 75 per cent of primary school pupils are not even doing one hour of exercise a day and a third of parents are struggling to keep their children active.

Baroness Grey-Thompson, who is on the ukactive board, added: "Research we conducted with Premier Sport highlights the importance of structured physical activity sessions both in and out of school.

"That's why we're also calling for funding from the gov-

ernment's soft drinks levy to be used beyond the schools gates to ensure that physical activity sessions are accessible to children all year round."

Also lending his support to the idea is Olympic gold medalist Duncan Goodhew.

He added: "It doesn't seem right that we regularly measure numeracy and literacy skills in schoolchildren but we don't regularly measure something that could potentially kill them!"

"This has to change if we're to curb the alarming rates of inactivity in our children."



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BREXIT: Will it cause issues with attracting top students and staff?

Universities shaping up to life in a world out of the EU

Emily King takes a look at how our higher education leaders are faring three months after their efforts to convince us to remain in the EU, amid funding and research fears, were defeated in the referendum.

IN THE run-up to the EU referendum earlier this year, there was a chorus of concern about the potential impact of a decision to leave by the vast majority of senior university chiefs.

Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow, vice chancellor (VC) at the University of Kent, which has sites in Canterbury, Medway and Tonbridge and Athens, Rome, Paris and Brussels, overseas, was one of more than 100 VCs to sign her name to a letter warning of the repercussions.

"Leaving would mean cutting ourselves off from unique support and established networks and would undermine the UK's position as a global leader in science, arts and innovation," the letter read.

Concerns include anxiety

over funding levels and Britain's role in the world.

And that seemed to be hammered home earlier this month when the majority took a tumble in the latest QS World University Rankings amid concerns over the impact of Brexit. In addition, there has been plenty of anecdotal tales of universities being kicked off collaborative projects due to concerns over future funding.

But now, three months on from the momentous decision to leave the EU, the reality is forcing them, publicly at least, to put on a brave face and insist that, for now at least, there has been no drop off in demand from foreign students.

A representative from Canterbury Christ Church University told KoS: "The result of June's EU referendum will not lead to changes overnight for our staff and students.

"Our values are built upon diversity, individuality and the power of education to change lives. And as such we remain fully committed to being an international university, ensuring that our research and teaching go to the heart of global issues. We very much value the contribution that all our students and staff, from all parts of the world, make to our community.

"We would like to emphasise that it is business as usual for students and staff while the UK government negotiates the country's longer-term relationship with the EU. We continue to welcome applications from students in other EU countries, and are looking forward to welcoming the increased number of new EU students who will join us for the academic year about to begin."

The University of Kent has long traded on being the UK's 'European university' and is traditionally well known for its high level of foreign students. Not to mention a high level of non-UK staff.

A spokesman explained: "In light of the decision taken at the referendum for Britain to withdraw from the European Union, we have renewed our commitment to Europe. We are proud to be an inclusive and diverse university, with students from 149 na-

tionalities and nearly 40 per cent of our research and academic staff from outside of the UK.

"We have postgraduate centres in four European capitals, many of our programmes have a strong international focus, and we value our long-standing relationship with over 100 European universities. Looking to the future, we see new forms of co-operation and the establishment of new partnerships as a key component of our global activities.

"We have not seen a negative change in applications or acceptances this year as a result of the EU referendum."

A University of Greenwich's Medway campus spokesperson echoed the sentiment: "Many EU nationals, and those from other parts of the globe, choose to work and to study with Greenwich at our Medway campus, playing an integral part in the life of the south east, and contributing to its economic success.

"International student numbers at Greenwich, particularly EU nationals, have so far remained steady since the announcement of Brexit. We do not expect to see an immediate impact on these numbers but we will be monitoring this as the government moves further into the official changes.

"Meanwhile, EU nationals are, and will remain, valued members of our community. Recruitment of EU students is going ahead as normal for this year."

Last week Professor Goodfellow, who is also president of Universities UK, which provides a united voice for higher education institutes, addressed university leaders at its annual members' conference, said: "In planning for life outside the EU we, like the government, have a vision of a strong post-Brexit Britain with a thriving economy and a fairer society. The vote to leave the EU poses significant challenges for universities that we need to address, however, we believe that British universities can thrive post-exit with the right support from government.

"Reform of the immigration system is long overdue, to recognise the value of interna-

tional students as temporary visitors and to remove unnecessary barriers for highly-skilled staff wanting to work at UK universities.

"We make no apologies for continuing to make the strong case for a government-backed campaign to promote the UK's world-class higher education sector across the globe, accompanied by a visa regime that makes clear that international students and staff are welcome and make a highly valued contribution to the British economy and society.

"We must redouble our efforts to promote the values of diversity, tolerance and freedom of speech that make British universities the envy of the world."

While there has been no drop in intake of EU students to any of the Kent universities this year, the government have not yet made clear it's intent for EU nationals hoping to study in the UK next year (2017-18).

The government has said those who have started their studies in the UK this autumn have still been eligible to receive loans and grants throughout the duration of their course, but have not stated if this will be the case for those who start their studies in the autumn of next year.

Professor Goodfellow added: "Put simply, universities are currently unable to answer two crucial questions that are being frequently asked by prospective EU students considering whether to apply to start courses in the UK in autumn 2017. What fees will you charge for any years of my course which are post the date of exit? Will I be able to access any financial support?

"This issue is urgent. UCAS applications have opened for the 2017-2018 intake and EU students are almost twice as likely as UK students to apply very early for those courses with October deadlines.

"I urge the government to take swift and positive action to address uncertainty, prevent a likely sudden decline in EU student applications and provide much needed reassurance to prospective EU students and universities across the UK."

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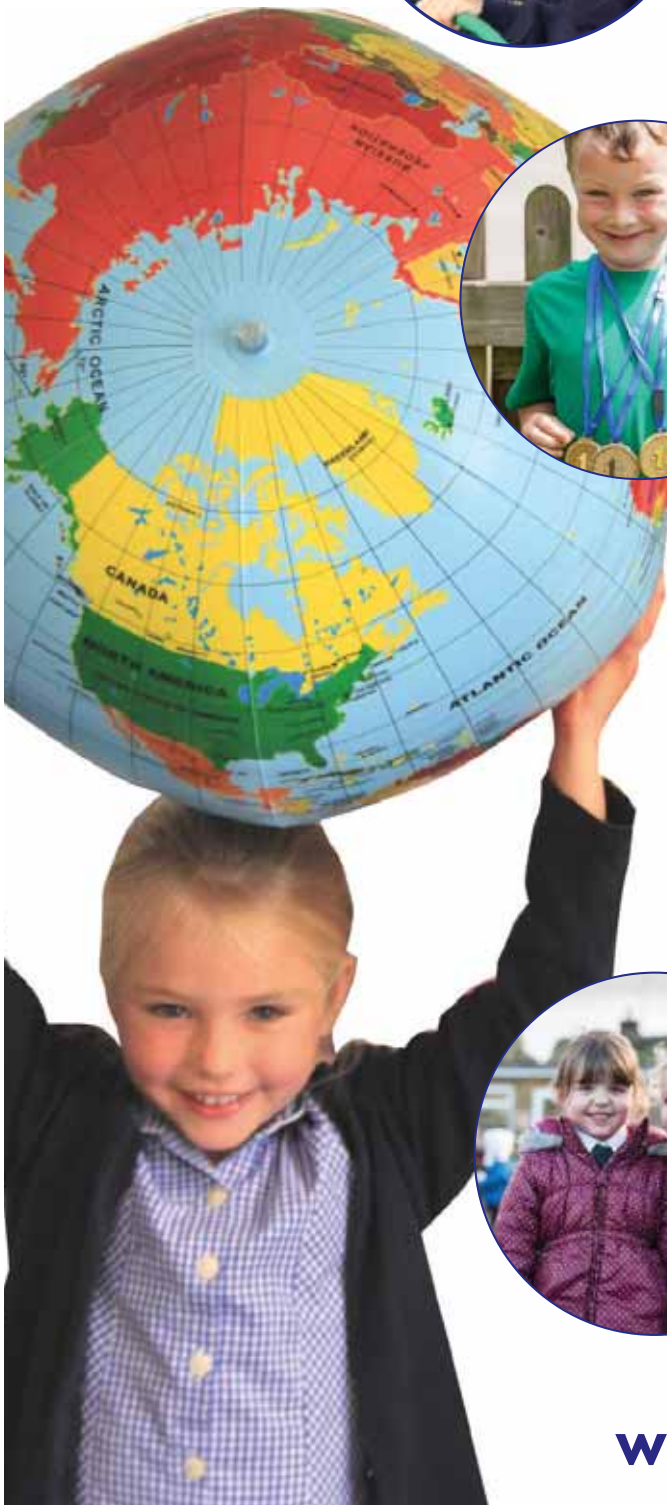
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EDUCATION FOR KENT

Planting seeds to fire our children's imagination

Chris Murphy takes a look at the growing influence of forest schools and finds out exactly how they fit into education system

THERE are some educational subjects that absolutely need to be done in the cosy confines of a bricks and mortar classroom.

For everything else, there are forest schools.

Embraced for their ability to take children out of their comfort zones and give them access to activities previously frowned upon due to over protective staff and parents, they are playing in a key role in many children's learning progress.

Yet confusion still surrounds what they actually do and how they fit among the standard education system which rolls out across the county.

Anne-Marie Medhurst is a champion of forest schools, conducting lessons alongside regular schools for children aged between five and 10.

Many of her lessons take place in Jeskyns Community Woodland in Cobham, near Gravesend.

She explains the schools run alongside the standard curriculum but

seek to enrich pupils lives.

Ms Medhurst told us: "It tends to be done with traditional schooling. We supplement a normal education.

"Students, as part of their weekly schooling, might have a session where they go outside and get into forestry.

"They stem from outside schools in Sweden and arrived in Britain some time ago and are becoming more and more popular.

"We do education outside – we take learning outside and basically we want to give children some fundamental skills of perseverance and problem solving.

"Those things don't need to be done in a traditional school environment. That can be taken outside to cover links with normal lessons, like maths, English, science and geography.

"But we do not do a maths lesson or a science lesson – these are merged with other skills. We take a more holistic approach to education."

She explained there is a lot of cross-

over with the sorts of things children will do at traditional clubs such as the Cubs, Scouts and Brownies.

There is danger, however, and children do need to learn fast how to handle things like knives, saws and even fire.

Ms Medhurst said: "We do things that are classified now as dangerous. We let them climb trees, play with sticks and learn how to use tools like knives and saws and mallets.

"But it is all done in context and safely. So far, the only person needing a first aid kit was me. No one has yet ended up in hospital.

"We teach them skills, and understand what is dangerous. The children have to risk assess themselves, I am not going to do it all for them.

"I will explain the inherent dangers but they have to assess the risk."

Alice Canon runs the Fir Tree Forest School in Ashley, near Dover.

She said: "It can be very busy with around 120 children in the summer months dropping to a dozen or so during the colder months.



ADVENTURE: The schools are designed to encourage practical challenges

"Assessing success is a difficult thing to do as we take quite a few children with autism and other conditions.

"But what we do find is that very often some of these children get so much out of it that they are actually speaking with other children, whereas in class they never said a word.

"Some teachers are astonished at the extent of their vocabulary because before coming to us, they just didn't want to talk."

Dee McConkey is the head of pre-prep at Kings Schools in Canterbury where they have a forest school.

She said: "Ours is thriving and is



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FUN: Kings pupils above and left, Anne-Marie Medhurst, below



incorporated into our normal class timetable.

"The students have an allocated time they go out with trained staff running through reception, year one and two and filters on to older children too. It is important because it is all about experiencing the great outdoors and taking calculated risks.

We encourage them to take risks, we encourage them to try. We want them to take it to the max, but within a safe environment.

"Children don't usually have that freedom.

"We can't measure success in the conventional manner. But the thing the children remember from their ear-

ly years is forest school. We are giving them life skills and life experiences that will stay with them forever."

Melanie Slade, part of the University of Northampton, produced a paper on Forest Schools.

She said: "Within the context of declining access to, and engagement with, the natural environment forest

schools can provide invaluable life experiences for our children."

She said a researcher from the university evaluated the impact of visits made by children from the pilot primary school through a series of pupil, staff and parent interviews.

Ms Slade says that no firm conclusions could be made as to whether

they are a complete success, and added: "Analysis of the interview data showed that evidence of impact was anecdotal and it was clear that a systematic approach was needed."

While firm evidence of educational benefit is awaited, few would argue they fail to fire the imagination of impressionable youngsters.

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Ofsted findings put county's schools ahead

KENT schools are continuing to improve and perform better than the national average, according to figures from Ofsted.

With the new school year now well under way, the education watchdog revealed that some 89 per cent of schools in Kent are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' compared with 84 per cent nationally.

In August 2015, 82 per cent fell into those two categories, having risen consistently from 75 per cent in 2014, 71 per cent in 2013, 60 per cent in 2012 and 59 per cent in 2011.

The current situation is that 85 per cent of secondary schools, 90 per cent of primary schools, 98 per cent of special schools and 86 per cent of pupil referral units are judged to be good or outstanding, as well as 95 per cent of early years settings.

Figures released this month reveal county is above average for those schools rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by government watchdog

Patrick Leeson, Kent County Council's corporate director of education, said the excellent results highlighted the hard work and dedication of all involved in education in Kent and the determination to make sure every school a child attends is good or outstanding.

"I am delighted the most recent Ofsted inspection judgments show that even more schools are



■ County's schools are faring well say Ofsted's findings

continuing to deliver better education in Kent," he said.

"Improving the education, welfare, safety and life chances of children and young people is the most important thing we do, and these continued improvements will make a difference for years to come."

Roger Gough, cabinet member for

education, added: "Ofsted is continually raising the bar in terms of standards in schools and Kent schools have risen to this challenge.

"We are continually looking for improvements and have set an ambitious target of at least 90 per cent of primary and secondary schools to be judged good or

outstanding in the next year or two.

"Our vision is that every child and young person should go to a good or outstanding school, have access to the best teaching, and benefit from schools and other providers working in partnership with each other to share the best practice as they continue to improve."



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ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Junior King's head set to retire after 17 years service to top school

The Junior King's School is a leading IAPS prep school for boys and girls aged from 3 to 13 years, situated in the attractive grounds of Lord Milner's former home in the village of Sturry, two and a half miles outside Canterbury.

The school, once described by Kipling as 'the junior branch of the oldest school in England', forms part of the historic King's School and Cathedral Foundation in Canterbury.

The Junior School was originally located in what is now Walpole House, adjacent to the Archbishop's Palace. The young boys there were affectionately known as Parrots due to the enormous noise they made in the hallowed precincts of the cathedral.

In 1929 a generous bequest from Lady Milner, in memory of her late husband Alfred, enabled the governors to move the 70 juniors into Lord Milner's beautiful home at Sturry Court.

Rudyard Kipling, a great friend of Lord and Lady Milner, opened the

new school which for many years was known as Milner Court.

This academic year is an important period for the school as it celebrates 30 years of pre-prep provision, offering excellent facilities and teaching to young children from the tender age of three. The school plans to mark the occasion with a celebration during the academic year.

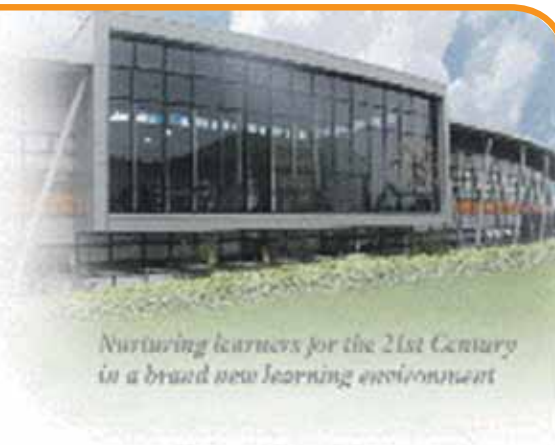
The year also marks the retirement of headmaster Peter Wells, after 17 years of outstanding service to the school.

Peter's long standing dedication and contribution to the school, alongside his wife, Vivienne (Junior King's registrar) has been invaluable over the years including fund-raising and overseeing the development of the school's astroturf sports pitches and the recent addition of the state of the art Michael and Vibeke Herbert Music School, to name but two of many notable achievements.

The school, staff and pupils would like to wish both Peter and Vivienne the very best for the future and say a huge thank you for everything they have done over the past 17 years.

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If you're thinking about what to do after sixth form or college, or contemplating a career change, then perhaps osteopathy should be on your list of options.

Osteopathy is a distinct healthcare profession that is legally regulated in the UK. Having a UK recognised qualification in osteopathy allows practitioners to set up their own practices and, as primary healthcare professionals, they're able to both diagnose and treat patients.

Osteopaths use their hands to gently release muscles and joints with a variety of techniques working with the natural healing properties of the body. This then encourages healthy movement, which in turn restores healthy function.

Techniques involved could be massage, articulation, lymphatic drainage, manipulation of joints or the ever so gentle balancing techniques and cranial osteopathy. Appointment usually last between 30 and 45 minutes, which gives the osteopath time to fully understand their patient's complete state of health.

Osteopathy is recognised to reduce pain, increase joint mobility and relieve muscle tension. Most readily associated with the relief of backache, arthritic symptoms and exercise related injuries, osteopathy is actually a far broader healthcare approach. Based on the concept that the structure of the body is directly related to the function, osteopaths have positive health effects on a wide range of common conditions, and because it aims to improve the way that our bodies function it can be applied to patients of all ages.

Osteopaths work with elite athletes and top sports people, they work with Olympic teams



and football clubs, they treat children, they treat pensioners. Their holistic approach to health is appreciated across the population.

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Maidstone is recognised as a centre of excellence for the training and practice of osteopathy and hosts the world renowned European School of Osteopathy (ESO). Founded in 1974, the School has been instrumental in the development of osteopathic education across Europe and beyond. The School currently has partner colleges across Europe, including Russia, Poland and Denmark, and also helped in the development of schools in France, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Egypt and Italy.

Based at the beautiful Boxley House, the ESO's four year Integrated Masters degree programme is respected for having one of the most innovative



and exciting ranges of techniques, which means graduates are well prepared to excel in an exciting and rewarding career.

Over 90% of students are in employment/further study within 6 months of graduation.

So, if you think you would enjoy a career helping people of all ages and have an interest in human physiology and health, maybe osteopathy is for you.

For further information and informal advice contact the ESO's Admissions Team on 01622 671558 or visit www.eso.ac.uk.

Is there more than one way to treat a headache?

The ESO has recently introduced a specialist Headache Clinic at its Tonbridge Road osteopathic clinic.

Headache is more common than back pain, and some headaches are very debilitating, even tension-type headaches.

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In order to help prevent often life-wrecking symptoms, an osteopath can make sure your muscles and joints are functioning optimally. They are also well-placed to give basic advice on your work station and other occupational and postural issues leading to strain on the neck and shoulders.

Conversely, headaches can themselves be the cause of a lot of neck and shoulder pains, especially in the case of migraines and other complex headache conditions. This may be because pain is directly referred from irritated nerves in the head and face, or through the sheer stress of coping with the pain levels and other debilitating symptoms of the headache or migraine.

For more information about headache and the benefits of osteopathic treatment please visit the ESO Clinic website www.eso.ac.uk/clinic.

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Open Days - find out more

Wednesday 26th October

Wednesday 30th November

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To find out more visit

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ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Find out why so many are heading here

St Lawrence College is situated on the Broadstairs side of Ramsgate, just a short 10 minute walk from Ramsgate rail station.

The school has been a proud part of the town's heritage since it was founded in 1879 and generations of local families have been educated within its ivy-clad walls.

As well as day pupils, St Lawrence welcomes boarding pupils from across the globe, providing a vibrant cosmopolitan environment.

The warm, happy and welcoming surroundings of St Lawrence College are a far cry from the stereotypical stuffy private school image often portrayed in the media and, if you have never considered independent (private) education for your family before, an open day is the ideal time to

Why not book a place at one of the St Lawrence College open days to take your first step on enrolling your children at the historic institution

take a first look.

You can book a place at the junior school open day on Friday, September 20, for either the morning or afternoon session: 9.30am to 12pm or 1.30pm to 3pm.

As well as having a full tour of the school, you will also meet the new head of the junior school, Ellen Rowe, other members of staff and pupils.



■ Whatever their age, St Lawrence College could be perfect for your child

Refreshments will be available, and children and other family members are very welcome to accompany you. If you are considering Year 7 and above, book a place at the senior school open day on Saturday, October 1. The open day starts with signing-in from 10.30am followed by thorough tours of the school.

The principal, Antony Spencer, will

give a speech before a buffet lunch is served for visitors. There will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions of staff and pupils. The open day will end at 2pm.

Often, the open day is just a taster and the start of the registration process. Families may then wish to arrange a time for a more personal visit, a meeting with the head and

registrar to discuss their individual child's needs, and another look at any areas of particular interest, before a decision is made.

Book a place at open day to find out why more and more parents are choosing St Lawrence College for their child's education.

For more information, see the website www.slcluk.com.



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Vocational skills boosted with college's top hotel

Chris Britcher went to visit The Yarrow Hotel in Broadstairs to learn the education ethos which lurks beneath its splendour...

FURTHER education colleges have not had an easy time of late, to put it mildly.

Endless budget cuts and intense competition from schools have left many struggling financially and making headlines more for cutting courses and staff than academic endeavour.

Which, given the vital role they play in offering more vocational courses for a generation moving from their GCSEs to the world of work, has raised plenty of concern.

Failure to have seen the problems on the horizon, or a lack of prudence with their spending, has claimed the reputation of many. The implosion of K College was a fine example, and Canterbury College's current debt issues have led to it having to take desperate steps simply to survive.

East Kent College, however, has emerged from its past as Thanet College, to become one of the major offerings of FE in the county. Having consumed the former K College sites in

Folkestone and Dover, its reach is significant – stretching from its Broadstairs hub and along the east coast.

It is also the knight riding to the hoped for rescue of Canterbury College. All the talk is of partnership and assistance thus far, but a fully fledged merger is surely just around the corner.

But while all around it have lost their heads, it has kept its screwed on and its commercial and financial nous firmly focused. The most significant latest offering of which is a pioneering project which not only offers an unparalleled opportunity for students to develop vital skills, but also feeds directly into the local economy both now and in the future.

More significantly, perhaps, it is also seen as its most ambitious revenue generating 'bolt on' yet.

The Yarrow Hotel is a magnificent Jacobethan-style building which predates the college's Broadstairs campus which sprawls down the hill below it.

Its tall, broad windows and imposing facade a reminder it started life as

a children's convalescence home – opened by shipbuilder Alfred Yarrow in 1894 for Broadstairs' healthy air to aid recovery. The stairs are shallow and broad for the little feet which once climbed them, the windows vast to let in plenty of light and the corridors designed to allow the children room to play and run inside when the weather kept them inside.

Opened this summer, it is a fully fledged, 365-days-a-year boutique hotel. It's awash with quality fixtures and fittings, a bar, restaurant, salon, spa, huge hospitality areas with sparkling chandeliers and to the untrained eye, there is nothing to differentiate it with any other high quality hotel offering. Except, perhaps, that some of the staff look a little young.

The core staff are professional, experienced folk who know the hospitality industry back to front. But the educational magic here is that the rest are either students following relevant courses just yards away or apprentices who have emerged from



GRAND: Entrance of the Yarrow Hotel

their education and are now working in an environment designed to allow them to flourish. It's hard not to be impressed by the vision.

It's not just an easy case of free labour to fuel a money-making venture either. All students get paid comfortably above basic rates and when oth-

er catering students are called in to help with big events, then they'll pick up a wage too.

Because The Yarrow is the only regular hotel which is part of a further education college in the country. It has to make money, of course, and while the college is coy on how much

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ROLES: Head chef, Ben Williams, inset, and staff in the kitchens



it has made during its opening summer, there is a contentment that suggests it performed admirably. It needs to keep delivering to justify its existence, however.

Funded by a £10 million grant from the Skills Funding Agency, its educational raison d'être is at the very heart of its plans.

Shane Godwin, the college's commercial director, explains: "What we are doing here is meeting the skills that are needed in this area. Thanet relies heavily on its hospitality industry and we are delivering the training necessary to ensure our students can progress into high end, quality jobs. "Everything we're doing at the Yar-

row is designed to weave into the fabric of the local economy. We want them to come to our college and leave with the skills they need to be a success in what is a difficult economy."

There is certainly no lack of ambition. Head chef is Ben Williams who has previously worked at the likes of Reed's of Faversham and Canter-

bury's Abode. Visiting him in his hot kitchen on an already steamy mid September afternoon and his mission is very clear. "I want us to be the best restaurant in Broadstairs, then to be the best in Thanet."

Yet it is passion to teach everything, to positively repel shortcuts and to allow students to grow as chefs

which is most compelling.

East Kent College has taken an almighty plunge with this venture but it has struck upon a formula which is hard to resist. Good for the students, good for the tourist industry and good for the future economy.

There is life in the vocational FE dog yet, it seems.

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“Students told inspectors that they felt safe and well supported by the staff at the academy.”

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“We are immensely proud of our students’ achievements. They are a testament to our continual improvement over the last three years.”

Principal - Ms Mandy Gage

YEAR 6 OPEN EVENING

Thursday 6 October 2016

5 pm to 8 pm



Find out about how we are transforming life chances and encouraging our students to achieve their personal best.

SIXTH FORM OPEN EVENING

Thursday 8 DECEMBER 2016

5 pm to 8 pm



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When no meat means Merde

Although I love Europe, it has to be said that large areas of it have refused to love me back over the years. More specifically, they've steadfastly refused to feed me, not because they don't like me (though that may have played a part), but because I'm a vegetarian.

Apart from one school trip to Paris, which I chiefly remember for the culinary delight of deep bowls of hot chocolate for breakfast, I've been a vegetarian for all of my travels, including numerous trips to Europe, which has given me an interesting global insight – this being that, from Paris to Berlin, Palma to Budapest, everyone hates vegetarians and frankly couldn't care less about tantalising our stupid irritating meat/fish/poultry-free taste-buds.

Over the years, I've endured everything from endless piles of boring steamed vegetables (France), to "vegetarian salad" in Berlin ("vegetarian" until I discovered the ham and little bits of shredded bacon at the bottom!), to (in Amsterdam) an astonishing bowlful of whole shelled hard-boiled

“...the exasperated waiter, garbed in a jerkin and hose, ended up pointing silently at the bread basket, as if to say ‘That’s your lot’.

eggs – as if silently urging me to re-enact the famous scene in *Cool Hand Luke*.

In Belgium, it was egg again, this time one, singular, fried, and dumped on top of a mound of cubed swede. I mean, come on, Bruges, this was a flavour combination that not even a drunk ravenous student would put together at 4am. In Corfu, I did an entire week of sun, sea, and deep fried cheese. In Majorca, I was genuinely excited at the thought of vegetarian paella until it arrived – containing rice the consistency of window putty and three blackened mushrooms sticking up like tiny gothic tombstones to my taste-buds.

While things may have changed for the better now, when I was a music journalist, doing the rounds of European rock and pop festivals, the “veggie burger” was slow to catch on, and I ended up existing on beer, crisps, and sliced bread straight out of the

Salads with hidden ham, carrots doused in animal stock, plain boiled pasta...the perils of being a vegetarian in Europe still haunt

BARBARA ELLEN



packet. Or buying chips that turned out to be generously sprinkled with free calamari. In Budapest, it was all our own fault, as we blundered into a tourist-themed ‘Olde Worlde’ type restaurant that appeared to specialise in medieval suckling-pig feasts, with animals practically being slaughtered at the table. On that occasion, even the vegetables were doused in animal stock, and the exasperated waiter, garbed in a jerkin and hose, ended up pointing silently at the bread basket, as if to say “That’s your lot”.

Over the years, France has proved to be both one of my favourite places on earth, and my vegetarian Death Star. The mere offer of risotto in a French restaurant has usually been enough to make me fall to my knees and sob with gratitude. Otherwise, apart from the gloomy mounds of steamed veg (all too often a pile of green beans with some artfully carved carrot on top), I’ve been given boiled pasta with tiny bits of chopped up cold tomato, boiled pasta with a sprig of herb on top, boiled pasta with a massive brick of brie stuffed on the side, and boiled pasta with... actually, just boiled pasta, not even butter.

It’s the French who’ve seemed most discomfited by my vegetarianism, leading to genteel stand-offs. It generally begins with the waiting staff listening in aghast silence as I struggle to explain my “affliction”. Next, the startled raising of an eyebrow as it becomes clear that I won’t even eat fish. Followed by a polite but firm refusal to rustle up an omelette even though there are eggs and cheese all over the menu. In the posher restaurants, I wasn’t allowed an amuse bouche – my bouche remained unamused as others happily scoffed their carnivore delicacies. Once a French chef even left his kitchen to come to the table to chide me for being vegetarian. It wasn’t done rudely – it was with a terrible pity in his eyes as he announced that I would be receiving a special savoury twice-baked soufflé. “It will be exquisite!” he growled sternly as he left the table. And it was – though by then I was so hungry I’d

have eaten Donald Trump’s twice-baked eyebrows.

It’s fair to say that it’s not only European restaurants that have been inconvenienced or irritated by my vegetarianism – my dining companions have also suffered. There’ve been times when a relationship arc could be plotted by how boyfriends have dealt with it – starting off all supportive and lovey-dovey, then, as the arc sharply curves downwards, sometimes plummeting, teeth get gritted and sighs are exhaled. I’ve found that ‘Vegetarianism Abroad’ tests and strains relationships. Some people have even implied that I’ve “ruined” holidays with my stubborn desire to remain vegetarian on foreign soil, and not “Just eat fish while you’re here.” Admittedly, there are people who do this – they’re a special group of vegetarians called ‘flexitarians’, or, more accurately, hypocrites.

My attitude is that I’ve been a vegetarian all my adult life, and I’m not going to stop just because I’ve waved my passport at someone at airport security. I would also take issue with the popular misconception that vegetarians are “fussy” or “difficult”. Most vegetarians I meet are just like me – polite, subdued, grovelling, ground-down husks of humanity. All this remains true in Europe, except for the addition of frantically leafing through translation books looking for the lingo for “I’m freaking starving. Please bring me anything that didn’t die.”

By now, there may be people reading this who want to shake me gently by the throat, and scream: “What is this quasi-xenophobic clap-trap? Was this journalist going out of her way to eat badly in these amazing countries – is she a complete idiot? She does not

appear to have heard of the ‘Mediterranean diet’. I know for a fact that Europe has all sorts of wonderful vegetable dishes!”

Fair enough. Certainly it’s true that I’ve experienced equivalent (or worse) vegetarian nightmares in the UK, most of which could be compiled in a glossary entitled ‘101 Ways To Make Goat Cheese Terrifying, Inedible AND Depressing’. It should also be noted that I’ve never had a vegetarian partner, or even had a lot of vegetarian people as friends, so I haven’t tended to hunt down actual vegetarian restaurants in foreign cities, if any existed at the time I was visiting.

Moreover, many of the examples above are years-old, and probably stuck in my mind because there were particularly gruesome or funny.

Of course Europe abounds with dazzling tasty, nourishing vegetarian dishes, and it’s mainly my own stupid, disorganised fault if and when I failed to find them. And things have improved vastly for vegetarians in Europe. This year, I returned to the exact same place in Corfu that just a few years ago, offered me deep fried cheese for every course, and the food was wide-ranging and absolutely delicious, and not just confined to the Greek salad. Likewise, on more successful trips to Amsterdam, the site of the hard-boiled egg extravaganza, I’ve found wonderful street cafes bursting with imaginative vegetarian fare.

I adore Italy, and have eaten some of the best meals of my life on the Amalfi coast. A simple mozzarella, avocado

and basil salad eaten in Sorrento was so delicious that it still pings into my head, in grand Pavlovian style, every time Italy is mentioned. And it’s not all been about unpleasant surprises. When I visited Krakow, I didn’t expect much, and was fully expecting that I’d have to do a tragic trudge to a local supermarket to stock up on “emergency snacks” to keep in my handbag. As it was, I found vegetarian-friendly delis and restaurants everywhere, frequently blessed with live music into the small hours. Go Krakow!

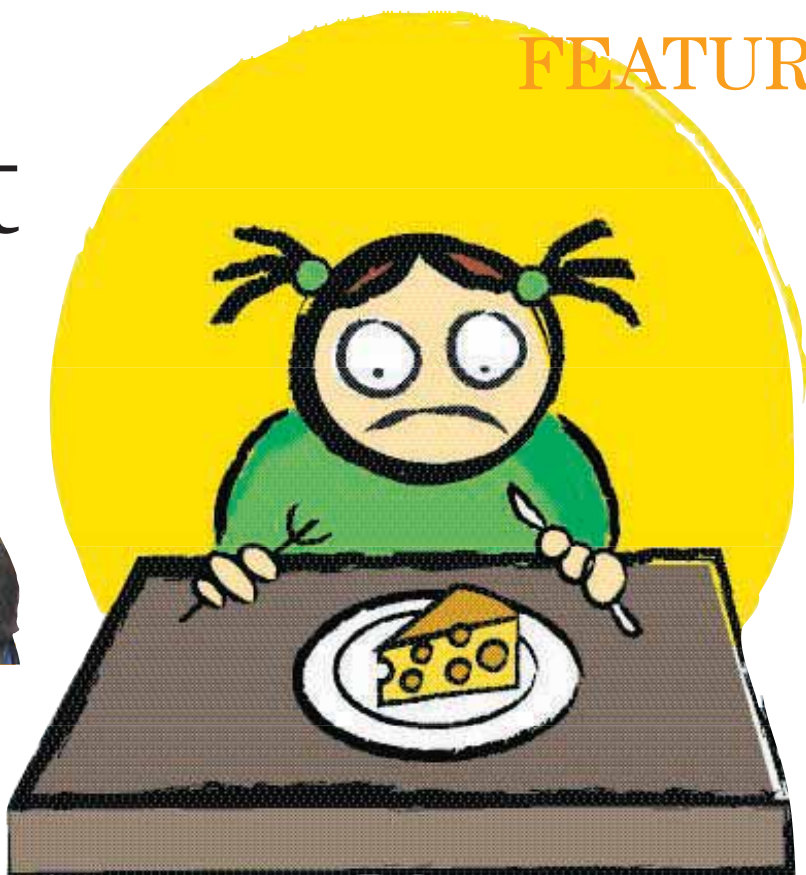
As for France, my culinary Nemesis? Clearly the food hasn’t been that big an issue, because I’ve returned again and again, all over France, whether the French want me

to or not, and it says something that Paris remains my city of choice for every big birthday and really special occasion.

Is it still sometimes difficult for vegetarians to consistently eat well in somewhere like France? Yes, it bloody well is, but frankly who cares? Put bluntly, I’d rather sit in the street outside a Parisian café, with a coffee, and a cheese baguette I have to check doesn’t have ham sneaked into it, than not sit outside a Parisian café at all. You live and you learn, and what I’ve learned about Europe is that there’s more than one type of hunger.

■ Barbara Ellen is a columnist for the Observer. She has also written for NME, the Times, Mail on Sunday, Elle, Marie Claire, Grazia, Loaded, GQ and Mojo.

■ This article first appeared in The New European.





HEARTBROKEN: Alex Ferns plays the main character Alex Dennison who is investigating his love interest's murder

EastEnder's baddie turned nice in Rehearsal for Murder

EastEnder's Alex Ferns and Anita Harris talk about their roles in the new show

REHEARSAL for Murder takes to the stage following the decade-long success of The Classic Thriller Theatre Company.

The Classic Thriller Theatre Company has sold more than two million tickets and regularly plays to sold-out theatres across the UK.

Now, theatre producer Bill Kenwright presents the new production, for one of stage and screen's classic thrillers, Rehearsal for Murder.

The production stars actors such as Alex Ferns from EastEnders who will play playwright Alex Dennison, and Anita Harris from the Carry On films, who plays the producer of the show they're rehearsing and then becomes a suspect in Alex Dennison's quest to find the person who murdered his love interest.

Here KoS talks to both about their involvement with the play.

Speaking of how they got involved with Rehearsal for Murder, they both sound equally excited. Mr Ferns states: "Bill Kenwright sent me the script, which is great. When I met Roy Marsden, the director, I said I wanted to do it because I really wanted to work with him."

While Ms Harris quips: "Well firstly, the role is rather delicious. She is strong and tender at the same time. Secondly, to work with Bill Kenwright again. You feel very safe with Bill because he always gives you a lovely company of players and a wonderful production."

Mr Ferns and Ms Harris have actually worked together previously, as Ms Harris explains: "Alex and I toured together in Strangers On A Train, so I have great admiration for him. We had a lovely hug when

we saw each other again. Touring's a lovely bonding thing."

As the play has already been touring, both actors were asked what their most enjoyable part of the production has been so far.

"For me, the most enjoyable moment is always when the audience suddenly gets who the murderer is," says Mr Ferns. "There's an audible gasp."

However Ms Harris states that getting to know her character is her most enjoyable thing about the production.

"The more you do this play, the more each of us finds in our character. You can never do it the same as the previous night. Every show is a clean canvas. I learned that very early in my career," comments Ms Harris. "Each time you do it is completely new. That's exciting."

"Something happens when I get

to the stage door; I can be tired, busy doing other things, and when I get to the stage door a new energy takes over," adds Ms Harris.

So, what can audiences expect from Rehearsal for Murder, according to the actors?

"They can expect a rollercoaster of emotions. There is quite a lot of thinking to be done but every night we put the speed and energy into telling the story so they come away feeling 'Wow'," enthuses Ms Harris.

Similarly, Mr Ferns adds: "Expect to be shocked, scared and surprised. It's a show that pulls the rug right from underneath you. You're in for a good night, that's for sure."

Rehearsal for Murder is coming to the Orchard Theatre in Dartford from September 19 to 24.

Ticket prices start at £17.50 and range to £30.50. They can be purchased from orchardtheatre.co.uk

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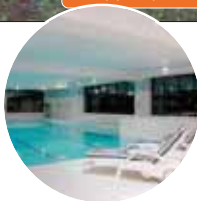
Carry on New Year Party in Leicestershire

Bosworth Hall Hotel - Self-Drive

27 January, 2017 • Quote: BO1-KOS

Extend your New Year celebrations at Bosworth Hall Hotel, in the village of Market Bosworth near Leicester. Our popular private party weekend has become a must-do annual event with guests returning year after year. There will be super entertainment from 60s band Union Gap and Roy Carter (ex-Drifters & Foundations). Add to this 2-for-1 drinks both nights and this is one party that's set to rock.

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Madeira Flower Festival

By Air

1 May, 2017 • Quote: FM5-KOS

In Madeira Springtime is honoured with a Flower Festival held every year after Easter. Festivities begin with the building of the 'The Wall of Hope'. Over 1,000 children place one flower each on the wall to symbolise hope. The next day dozens of highly-decorated floats take part in the Flower Parade while local artists build amazing floral carpets. Included excursions take in the best of the island.

INCLUDED: Return flights with luggage from a choice of UK airports - supp't may apply • Seating for the Flower Parade • 3 half days and 1 full-day excursion • 7 nights stay at a 4-star hotel in Funchal • 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches & 7 dinners from the buffet, plus afternoon coffee and cake • Drinks included with lunch and dinner - aperitifs, local wine, beer, soft drinks and local spirits • Entertainment some evenings • Transfers abroad • Services of our representative in resort



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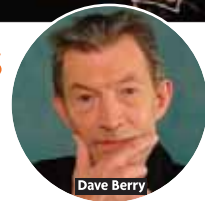
Spring Back to the 60s Party - Pontins Pakefield

Suffolk Coast - Self-Drive

Friday, 10 March, 2017 • Quote: PP3-KOS

Join us at Pontins Pakefield, on the Suffolk coast, for a Spring Party - for over 40s only - to blow away the winter cobwebs. We've lined up entertainment featuring Marty Wilde and the Wildcats, Cupids Inspiration, Glenn Darren and the Krewcats, Dave Berry PLUS The Cilla Show. Enjoy non-stop entertainment from Friday evening to Sunday evening and free drinks every night.

INCLUDED: 3 Free drinks per person per night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks and mixers • Entertainment • 3 nights en-suite chalet accommodation - club upgrade available • 3 dinners & 3 breakfasts • Free parking



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6 June, 2017 • Quote: KA6-KOS

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Largest ever programme for The Beaney House of Art

By Emily King

emily.king@archant.co.uk

A Grayson Perry exhibition later this year will have the largest programme of events running alongside it when it comes to The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge in Canterbury.

The programme will look at the themes and craftsmanship of Grayson Perry's *The Vanity of Small Differences*, and aims to cater for adults, families and children.

The *Vanity of Small Differences* tells the story of class mobility and the influence social class has on our taste.

The craftsmanship is inspired by William Hogarth's six tapestries, as it too consists of six exuberant tapestries, only these tapestries include characters and incidents Grayson Perry experienced on journeys through Sunderland, Tunbridge Wells, and The Cotswolds for the TV series *All In The Best Possible Taste With Grayson Perry*.

The TV programme was first aired on Channel 4 in 2012 and won a BAFTA this year in the Spe-



INSPIRED: Grayson Perry's tapestries were inspired by the six tapestries by William Hogarth

cialist Factual category.

In the series, Perry embarks "on a safari amongst the taste tribes of Britain" to gather inspiration for his artwork, literally weaving the characters he meets into a narrative, including the contemporary taste needed.

The programme that runs alongside the Grayson Perry exhibition consists of:

Georgie Meadows: Stitched

Drawings from September 24-27; Popular Lecture: Grayson Perry and the Arts Council Collection on October 13; Class and Art - All in the best possible taste with Holder and Lamoon on October 15; popular Lecture: Modern Moral Matters on October 20; Georgie Meadows' Stitched drawings: artist talk on November 4; Childhood: A Grayson Perry Workshop for Grown Ups on November 5; Knowledge: A

Grayson Perry Workshop for Grown Ups on November 12; Wealth: A Grayson Perry Workshop for Grown Ups on November 19; and Afterlife: A Grayson Perry Workshop for Grown Ups on November 26.

There are also other hands-on workshops available.

The exhibition takes place from October 8 to December 4 and general admission is free.

Five Star Swing poppy tour

AS part of their national Poppy Appeal tour, Five Star Swing are coming to Maidstone's Hazlitt Theatre on September 25.

Tickets for an evening of swing can be purchased by calling 01622 758611.



Shane Richie and his band

FAMOUS in soap land, particularly for playing *EastEnders*' Alfie Moon, Shane Richie has swapped acting for music with his new gig and is coming to Margate Winter Gardens on November 11.

For tickets to this 80s' classics night, visit the box office margatewintergardens.co.uk

Sean Taylor in Whitstable

FOLLOWING festival and gig appearances across the UK this summer, Sean Taylor will be playing at The Royal Whitstable Oyster store on October 14.

Tickets can be purchased from whitsatblesessions.co.uk



Sarah-Jane Morris album

CANTERBURY-based Sarah-Jane Morris, who topped the charts with *The Communards*, is set to release a new album on October 16.

Compared To What covers a number of social issues and many songs reflect on the urgent concern for the refugee crisis.

The album will be priced at £13.99.

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Griff Rhys Jones returns

VTV personality, Griff Rhys Jones is returning to the stage with a new comedy show, Jones and Smith and will visit Maidstone's Hazlitt Theatre on October 22.

For tickets, visit parkwood-theatres.co.uk/Hazlitt-Theatre



Marlowe Theatre dinner

ACTS have been confirmed for The Marlowe Theatre's fifth anniversary gala.

There will be performances from National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, Northern Ballet, and Zoo Nation Youth Company.

The gala performance in Canterbury is on October 9, for tickets call 01227 787787.

Blues and rock band tour

Nine Below Zero will bring their tour to Whitstable's Horsebridge Centre on October 29.

The line-up consists of all four original members.

Tickets are available from horsebridge-centre.org.uk.



Luna Cinema Rochester

THE outdoor Luna Cinema is coming to Rochester Castle and there will be three dates and films to choose from.

Show dates are: The Goonies on September 22, Romeo + Juliet on September 23, Monty Python's Life of Brian on September 24.

To book tickets, visit thelunacinema.com.

RENT the Musical will visit two Kent theatres

By Emily King

emily.king@archant.co.uk

AWARD-winning musical RENT is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

And a tour opens on October 21 with rehearsals having started on September 12.

Completing the cast are Javar La'trial Parker (Showboat) as Benjamin Coffin III, and Joshua Dever and Ross Hunter as Roger Davis, Billy Cullum as Mark Cohen, Ryan O'Gorman as Tom Collins, Shanay Holmes as Joanne Jefferson, Layton Williams as Angel Schunard, Phillipa Stefani as Mimi Marquez, and Lucie Jones as Maureen Johnson with Kevin Yates, Jordan Lavinere, Christina Modestou, Bobbie Little, Jenny O'Leary and Katie Bradley all also making regular appearances.

The show, which has been produced by Robert Mackintosh and Idili Theatricals, in association with Theatr Clwyd, has previously won four Tony Awards, six Drama Desk Awards, and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1996.

The show premiered in London's



West End in 1998 at the Shaftsbury Theatre, where it ran for 18 months.

Jonathan Larson's musical, which was inspired by Puccini's opera La Boheme, was then adapted into a film in 2005.

Much-loved songs from the musical include Seasons of Love, Take Me or Leave Me, What You Own, One Song Glory, La Vie Boheme, Without You, I'll Cover You, Out Tonight, and I Should Tell You.

This new production of RENT

will have choreography by Lee Proud, musical direction by Phil Cornwell, set design by Olivier Award-winning Anna Fleische, and lighting by Olivier Award and Tony Award-winner Rick Fischer.

The musical will be coming to Bromley's Churchill Theatre from February 6 to 11, 2017, and Tunbridge Wells' Assembly Hall from May 23 to 27, 2017.

To book tickets, visit the respective box offices.

For more information, visit RENTonstage.co.uk



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School's out for Great British Bake Off's Martha

Martha Collison came fifth on Bake Off at the age of 17 and has since cooked for the Queen...

THE last two years have been rather dizzying for Martha Collison.

Back in 2014, aged 17, she competed in the fifth series of The Great British Bake Off, finishing in fifth place. Since then, she's baked for the Queen, given the Archbishop of Canterbury a cake master-class, written her first cookbook, *Twist*, and put her sweet tooth to good effect as an afternoon tea advisor at Wimbledon.

All of which has been pulled off alongside studying for her AS and A-Levels.

"It's been challenging," deadpans Collison, now 19, with a laugh. "My friends have to book days with me in advance.

"It's strange being a teenager and having to do that. It's just like jumping into work life before I thought I would."

Although she hails from a family of keen cooks, nobody in her immediate circle had been bitten by the baking bug.

"I was in the dark a little bit, but it made baking more fun because it was exploring new territory," recalls Collison, who lives in Berkshire with her family.

"I think my family thought it might be a phase," she adds, grinning. "But it wasn't. It's a long phase!"

Collison's original ambition was to become a food developer, but appearing on Bake Off changed everything.

"It's just been unbelievable," she says. "I've had to re-imagine my life,



FINISHED: Martha Collison is done with her studies now

but in a really good way. Bake Off has really helped shape my future, which I'm really grateful for."

She hopes *Twist*, in which she details tasty ideas to reinvent a series of baking classics, will be the first of many books.

Collison still can't quite get her head around how everything's panned out.

"I planned all these things to say to the Queen," she recalls of her time baking mini coffee and walnut, and lemon and elderflower cakes for the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations. "But by the time it actually got to me, I was a bit overwhelmed," she adds with a giggle.

"She told me it was very kind of me to make the cakes for her birthday, and I

feel like now I have to always be kind because the Queen has told me I am!"

Watching Bake Off now brings back memories of serving up her first bake.

"They'd placed me on a station right at the front, which meant I had to be judged first. Because I was so much younger than everyone, I was absolutely petrified. I had no idea what it would feel like to be judged, especially with everyone else listening, it was just the weirdest thing.

Now she's enjoying the fruits of her labour.

"For the first time in three years, I'm going to enjoy not having to study alongside all the baking," says Collison. "It'll be really nice to have that time to fully enjoy and appreciate everything I get to do."

Rob Auton's UK tour

FOLLOWING the success of performing at the Edinburgh Fringe, performer Rob Auton embarks on a UK tour and is coming to Margate Theatre Royal on September 25 and Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre on April 13.

Mr Auton has turned his attention to sleep and will perform a show suitable for anybody who has ever slept.

For tickets, visit box office websites.

Holly to visit Herne Bay

BUDDY Holly & The Cricketers is coming to Herne Bay's King's Hall on October 20.

The show stars musicians whose combined West End credits include Buddy, Lennon, Forbidden Planet and Jailhouse Rock.

Ticket prices are £18, plus booking fee, and are available via thekingshall.com or by calling 01227 374188.

Fickle Friends Cry

FICKLE Friends have unveiled the video for their new single Cry Baby, and will be coming to Tunbridge Wells' Forum on November 30.

Cry Baby, announced earlier this month, is the follow up to the bands debut track Swim.

To buy tickets to see the pop indie band, visit the box office website on twforum.co.uk or call 0871 2777101.

The Sons of Pitches

THE Sons Of Pitches are coming to Bromley's Churchill Theatre on November 29.

The winners of BBC2's The Naked Choir are set to perform never before seen material.

The band have also started delivering vocal workshops.

To purchase concert tickets, visit churchill-theatre.co.uk

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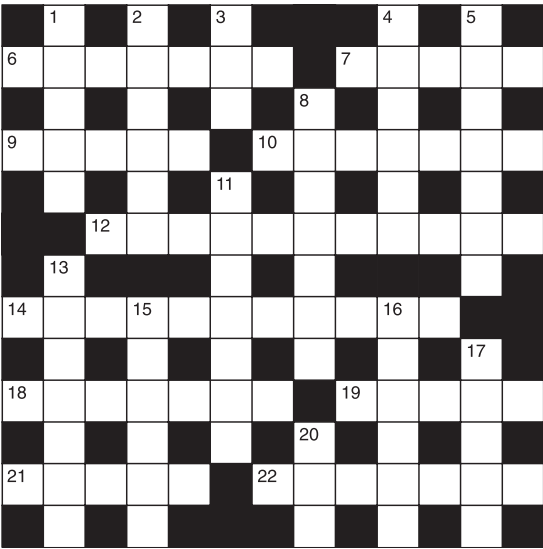


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DOUBLE CROSSWORD



- Quick**

Across

 - 6. Postpone (7)
 - 7. Essential (5)
 - 9. Angry (5)
 - 10. Shield (7)
 - 12. Belief (11)
 - 14. Diversion (11)
 - 18. Exalt (7)
 - 19. Condition (5)
- Down**

 - 1. Ornament (5)
 - 2. Cad (6)
 - 3. Spy (3)
 - 4. Fire-arm (6)
 - 5. Scarcity (7)
- Across**

 - 21. Likeness (5)
 - 22. Proposition (7)
- Down**

 - 8. Uprightness (7)
 - 11. Progress (7)
 - 13. Quandary (7)
 - 15. Groove (6)
 - 16. Choice (6)
 - 17. Aquatic animal (5)
 - 20. Timid (3)

Cryptic

- Across**

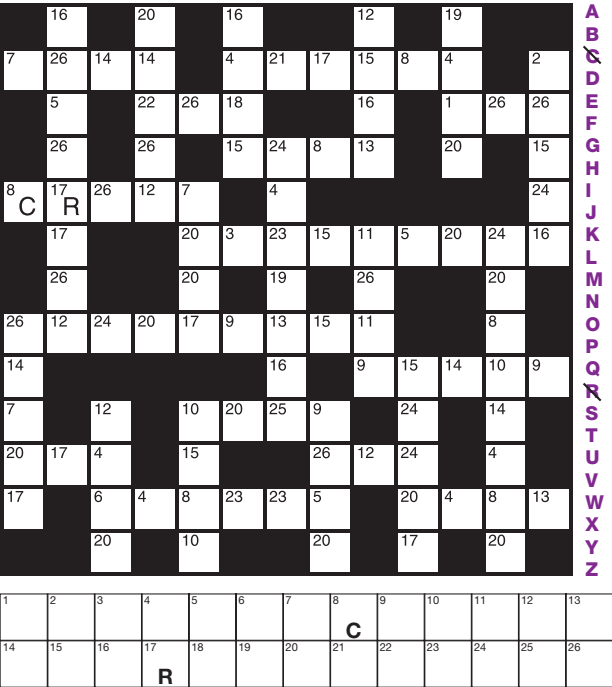
 - 6. Not a subject put on in advance (7)
 - 7. A gem of a girl? (5)
 - 9. Post the football coupon money (5)
 - 10. Stand up perhaps to receive the sweep (7)
 - 12. Hardly dark thoughts! (6,5)
 - 14. Entered before the others and won (4,2,5)
 - 18. Schoolboy's book case (7)
 - 19. Sound harsh, but also sounding wonderful (5)
 - 21. Range of a policeman in the South-East (5)
 - 22. Jams sold in jars (7)
- Down**

 - 1. It's loud for a musical note (5)
 - 2. Better kind of helper (6)
 - 3. Behave like a wild cat? (3)
 - 4. Having had a meal inside he'd become agitated (6)
 - 5. They took over from the night shift (7)
 - 8. Support us in shame (7)
 - 11. In age so twisted, suffering pains (7)
 - 13. Financially, and otherwise, it enables you to stand on your own feet (7)
 - 15. Get out a piece of fire-fighting equipment (6)
 - 16. All out hit (6)
 - 17. Extreme way to speak (5)
 - 20. An epitaph for a tearaway? (3)

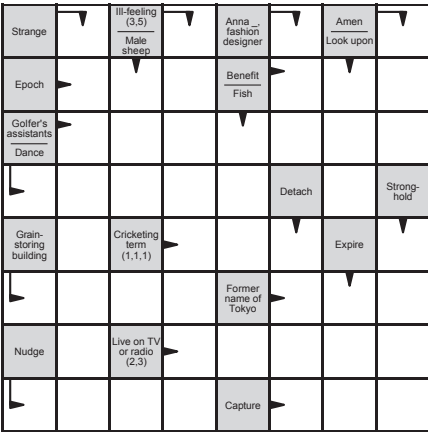
Scribble pad

CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter. For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.



Arrowword

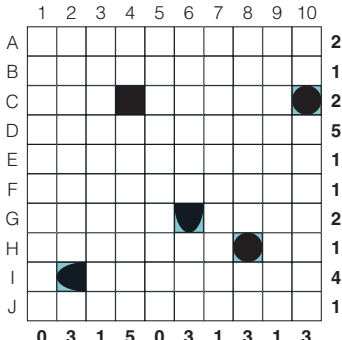


Enter your answers in the direction indicated by the arrows.

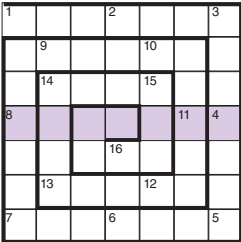
Battleships

Find where ships shown below are hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some of the squares have been filled to start you off.

- THE FLEET
- 1 x Battleship
 - 2 x Cruiser
 - 3 x Destroyer
 - 4 x Submarine



Word Spiral



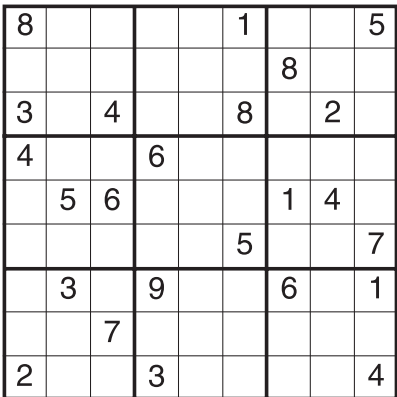
Starting from 1, fill in the grid clockwise with four-letter words. The last letter of each word becomes the first letter of the next to reveal the key word in the shaded boxes.

- 1. Not fast
 - 2. Lash
 - 3. Knitting stitch
 - 4. Jump
 - 5. Fruit
 - 6. Rip
 - 7. Info
 - 8. Eagerly expectant
- 9. Present
 - 10. Pith helmet
 - 11. Wading bird
 - 12. Practise boxing
 - 13. Precious stone
 - 14. Unit of length
 - 15. Foolish
 - 16. Small branch

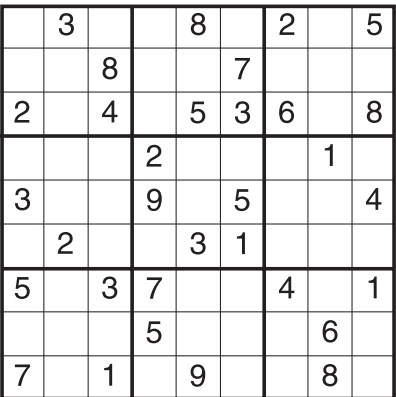
Keyword clue: A girl's name

SUDOKU

Hard



Easy



Solutions

Double Crossword

Cryptic

Across: 6 Monarch; 7 Beryl; 9 Snake; 10 Duspian; 12 Bright ideas; 14 Camel; 15 Heated; 5 Pyramas; 8 Sustain; 11 Agonies; 13 Balance; 15 Escape; 16 Strike; 17 Utter; 20 Rip.

Down: 1 Adam; 2 Rotten; 3 Fry; 4 Pistol; 5 Patchy; 8 Probity; 11 Advance; 13 Image; 22 Theorem.

Rejoice: 19 State; 21 14 Distraction; 18 Project; 12 Credibility; 7 Vital; 9 Irate; 10 Across: 6 Adjoin; 7 Rend; 7 Data; 8 Agog; 9 Gift; 10 Topi; 11 Ibis; 12 Spar; 13 Ruby; 14 Yard; 15 Daff; 16 Twig.

Keyword: Abigail

Word Spiral

1 Slow; 2 Whip; 3 Punt; 4 Leap; 5 Pear; 6 Rend; 7 Data; 8 Agog; 9 Gift; 10 Topi; 11 Ibis; 12 Spar; 13 Ruby; 14 Yard; 15 Daff; 16 Twig.

Codeword

1 Z; 2 J; 3 Q; 4 A; 5 M; 6 V; 7 D; 8 C; 9 S; 10 K; 11 P; 12 W; 13 H; 14 L; 15 X; 16 T; 17 R; 18 E; 19 G; 20 B; 21 U; 22 N; 23 Y; 24 O; 25 V; 26 W.

Sudoku - Hard

Sudoku - Easy

Battleships

Arrowword

The Pulitzer is a prize hotel

Following a grand renovation, a fascinating labyrinthine hotel in Amsterdam has just reopened its canal-side doors. **Sarah Marshall** gets lost in its magic...



It's easy to get lost in Amsterdam, ambling along a grid of peaceful canals straddled by bridges fading into infinity. But rarely is the route from hotel lobby to bedroom such a mission.

It's taken me several attempts to navigate the labyrinthine corridors of the city's Pulitzer hotel, a property made up of 25 Golden Age canal houses, all connected to make a sumptuous five-star maze.

I wonder if original American owner Peter Pulitzer (the grandson of Pulitzer Prize founder Joseph Pulitzer) embarked on his 30-year flurry of property purchasing because he couldn't decide which house he'd like to live in most.

Starting in 1960 with 12 elegant houses along the Prinsengracht and Keizersgracht canals, he opened Amsterdam's first five-star hotel. Over the years, he continued to buy neighbouring houses, fuelled by the motto 'Your neighbour's house is only for sale once', building up his empire and a loyal following.



■ The canal and reflections in the water of Amsterdam. Left, the Antique Collector's suite at the Pulitzer Hotel.

Although Pulitzer bowed out in 1990, the hotel and its art collection are still in private hands.

This month, the popular property reopened after a major two-stage renovation, positioning it as one of the most exciting hotels here. An additional 145 guest rooms have been bolted to the original 80, and an inner courtyard garden provides a contemplative escape from jangling bike bells that typically soundtrack

a city stroll.

Convenience and comfort have been drawing curious visitors for the past 45 years, but it's the hotel's colourful, character-filled past that really appeals. Merchants, musicians, art dealers and even pals of Rembrandt have swanned through the 400-year-old corridors.

Standard seems an unfair term to describe my room, decorated in deep blues and robust greys that could easily have come direct from Rembrandt's palette. Creative director Jacu Strauss claims he slept in every room to determine its personality and design, and he's given each space its own accent.

Common to most rooms, an art deco drinks trolley looped with tassels and a bicycle repair kit peeping from a desk drawer, are typical of an endearing quirkiness that's Amsterdam's signature style.

■ **Sarah Marshall was a guest of Pulitzer Amsterdam (www.pulitzeramsterdam.com), where doubles start at £235 with breakfast.**



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Please include your name and address, although these will be withheld in exceptional circumstances, and a daytime phone number for verification (this will not be published). We reserve the right to edit all letters.

Folkestone plans back on track

A CURRENT planning application indicates the Folkestone Harbour Company (FHC) are to renovate and decorate the viaduct and surrounding areas.

This is good news, because since the early 2000s, the harbour and former railway station have been allowed to deteriorate into a derelict state, devoid of maintenance and care.

However, it appears that coupled with the news, Network Rail are considering re-establishing the former Folkestone East station.

This will give impetus to the supporters of the port for use by major sea-going vessels would allow new businesses to establish themselves, thereby providing major employment and promote footfall for existing shops. Let us hope Kent County Council, Shepway District Council and the FHC are now ready to support such a new transport system which can truly transform Folkestone.

If the above were installed, the restoration of the port for use by major sea-going vessels would allow new businesses to establish themselves, thereby providing major employment and promote footfall for existing shops. Let us hope Kent County Council, Shepway District Council and the FHC are now ready to support such a new transport system which can truly transform Folkestone.

DSJ Gregory,
Folkestone

Granger gets my vote (this time)

RAY Duff and Phil Granger are the polar opposites of one another. My own opinions nestle somewhere inbetween.

Yet, generally, I find myself siding with Mr Duff more than Mr Granger when they're toe-to-toe, slugging it out in the centre of the ring.

However, over their heated Brexit debate, I'm afraid I have to agree with Phil Granger's well argued case.

Our 40 year-plus undemocratic enslavement by Brussels' corrupt dictatorship has almost destroyed Britain. Society is on the verge of collapse with the end product being all-out anarchy and civil war. I don't believe this to be over-dramatising. The UK's population is unsustainably high and growing exponentially. The threat from international terrorism has never been greater. The NHS is on its knees due to the sheer volume of people in need of treatment.

This massive overcrowding is also detrimental to our mental well-being and we have seen a significant rise in cases of self-harm and suicide attempts, particularly among young people.

School class sizes are too big, so pupils suffer as teachers cannot focus on each one's individual needs.

LETTER OF THE WEEK



We welcome DfLs and work hard to improve

I WAS appalled to see such a dreadful piece of social bias and inaccuracy on what seaside folk are supposed to think and do (Seaside town folk all 'swear and tattooed', KoS letters, last week.

Your correspondent Mr Wright purports to be a DFL (Down From London) and in doing so he creates a caricature of DFLs which is also untrue.

Ramsgate welcomes all those who have something to contribute be they from London or elsewhere and it is my experience that long term residents and 'newcomers' get on pretty well together and that both sections of the community add something to the spirit of the town.

There are of course individuals such as he describes, but no more and no less than elsewhere and in the end does it matter if a person's clothing is not haute couture and they have tattoos; it's what within them that matters; good or bad.

It is true that Thanet District Council is hard pressed; austerity has cut its spending by 40 per cent.

It is a relatively small council and it struggles to deliver services.

God helps those who help themselves and Ramsgate is trying hard to get things done.

The council has achieved a great deal in taking over derelict assets and restoring them; for example by floral planting in the Royal Parade arches, placing palm trees and flowers in key places, deep cleaning the streets and fixing the decorative light system and so on. Small things I agree; but a start.

The council is part of a consortium planning a large investment in Ramsgate via the Coastal Communities team.

The future for Ramsgate will probably involve some measure of devolution, which will mean that residents will have a greater say in what happens to their community. I hope your readers can take away a rather more positive view of Ramsgate.

Richard Styles
Town clerk, Ramsgate

I could continue, but I doubt my pen contains enough ink to contain the list of the negative aspects of being part of the European Union.

Thank God we voted to leave.
Clive Wilkins-Oppler
Canterbury

KoS is biased on Brexit debate

CAN I ask this newspaper to give a balanced view on Brexit?

In the last few issues, we have had the beliefs of Tim Farron, the leader

of the Liberal Democrats. Mr Farron writes of the feckless gamble of offering the country a referendum on the European Union.

What's feckless about people having a choice on this issue? A choice we should have had many years ago?

So, therefore, Mr Farron preaches democracy but when the votes go against his wishes then democracy and the will of the people should be ignored. The people of Kent voted overwhelmingly for Brexit. We do not need a politician who abides in the Lake District to lecture us.

H Hunt,
Beltinge

He's back again... pens at the ready

SO the usual rhetorical replies from Brexiteers Messrs Bullen, Hudson-Goul and Granger; which are as devoid of any real content as David Davis's "empty blandishments" in Parliament recently.

But to first digress slightly; despite the sustained rise in hate-crimes since the referendum; I have yet to hear any unreserved condemnations from the Brexiteers here.

I invite them to do so along with calling on all local councils to issue unequivocal statements against hate-crimes of any kind and start acting accordingly.

As for Mr Bullen, he says he campaigned for 40 years after losing the 1975 vote, so cannot complain if we Remainers do likewise either to stop Brexit or to rejoin a reformed EU later.

Mr Hudson-Goul typical airbrushes out the 'exceptional' British Empire's true plundering and damaging nature; which only benefited the elites of the day; and has latterly led to African and West Indian countries rightly demanding trillions in reparations for it. Mrs May's, and the Brexiteers, 'free trade' dogma is just more of the same likely along with dire TTIP-style trade 'deals' in support.

As for the current seeming increase in jobs and people, the spending is likely the usual summer boost; and Staycation; as well as getting purchases in now before any actual slow or downturn; albeit with far too much still on credit. Further the rise in exports, due to the fall of the pound, is a double edged sword with economic groups pointing out that the costs of imports are rising.

As for Phil 'The Donald' Granger; if I were to move to Calais, Koln or Greece, I'd join the various refugee support, integration or rescue groups; or the many help co-ops in Greece; instead of merely whinging as he usually does about anything really.

The murdered MP Jo Cox said "for all the diversity I see, we have far more in common than what divides us". Says far more in a few words than Farage has ever said about anything n'es pas Mr Granger?

Ray Duff,
Folkestone

Ah, isn't this nice to end with?

I WOULD just like to pass on my congratulations to your readers for creating a hugely entertaining letters page!

T Smith
Rochester

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- 3) Be written in clear, concise English.

- 4) Not be overly sensational.
- 5) Have a sense of humour.
- 6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
- 7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
- 8) Highlight topical issues of concern to North & West

- 9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.
- 10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.
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by **Harry Giles from
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Women Seeking

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SINGLE lady, 65, blonde, quiet nature, likes the outdoors, picnics, jiving, WLTm single gentleman for companionship and possible romance. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423411

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+. Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3002 Box 419673

RETIRED lady, an outgoing person, enjoys life, likes meals out, holidays, WLTm someone to share interests with, and quality time. Text only Mailbox: 552542

JANE young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun any age, no time wasters ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 3010 Box: 409715

LESLEY 66, retired beauty therapist, blonde hair, blue eyes, size 14, likes going out, travelling, holidays, arts, looking for a nice guy, 57-67, would be great to get a reply. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424147

KERRY 35yrs, married in open relationship, attractive, tall, slim and very presentable. Seeks discreet gent any age for casual pleasurable encounters. Tel: 0906 515 3042 Box 422363

WIDOW 70s, brown hair and eyes, likes walking, pub lunches, places of interest, good company and lots more, seeking a kind genuine male, a/n/s, 70-80. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423359

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel: 0906 515 3018 Box: 413399

GENUINE lady, 67, slim, GSOH, caring, honest, active, likes most things in life, days out, countryside, animals, long walks, visiting interesting places, cooking and holidays, WLTm a caring, honest male with GSOH, 67-73, with similar interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423289

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3022 Box 421375

PAT, petite blonde lady, GSOH, young looking for her age, seeks genuine gent any age with GSOH. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422393

LORRAINE, attractive solvent brunette, 34yrs, own house/car with gent any age, looks unimportant but must have GSOH. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3030 Box 422415

KIM, 50, lovely kind, 5ft 6, brown eyes, dark curly hair, curvy figure seeks nice genuine guy for LTR, same age as me. Text only Mailbox: 5512493

SUSIE, 36yrs, attractive, tall slim blonde seeks fifty shades of grey with discreet gent, must have a fun side looks unimportant. Tel: 0906 515 3038 Box 424045

RITA, seeks a genuine male for friendship, days out, she's very friendly, genuine and social, give her a call ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422403

SUSIE, 42yrs loves life, educated, brunette, own home, works to hard and now wants some fun. If you are a kind gent 30+ then text me for a chat. Box: 4187170

MERRY, widow, dark hair, kind and caring, hoping to meet a kind gent for friendship, possibly more. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422339

DIANNA, petite blonde lady, 38yrs, divorced, no kids, wants to spice up her life with new male friends, 35+, might lead to more who knows but no strings. ACA. Box: 4027026

BARBARA, is a caring lady who seeks a man to care for, she will do anything to make you happy. Just give her a call today. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422411

50YRS, old attractive lady, Sheila, caring honest, seeks discreet gent. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422469

GENUINE, GSH, attractive, outgoing professional female, 55, enjoys keeping fit, socialising and travel, WLTm similar male for relationship. Text only Mailbox: 5453851

MATURE lady early 80s, family orientated, likes dancing, holidays especially cruising, WLTm similar aged gentleman with similar interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421427

JO, mature understanding worldly Essex lady, seeks generous gent for regular fetish fantasy role-play, discretion assured. Text only Mailbox: 5320299

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

MALE smoker, seeks female 40-69 for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 391702

JOHN, 42yrs sophisticated business man wanting a lady by his side to spoil and entertain. Looks unimportant but must have a super personality and kind manner. Box 4086072

JOHN, 70, widower, lives in Broadstairs, Kent, slim, fit, active, young at heart, kind, caring and loving, likes country/beach walks, holidays, days out, theatre, eating out, music, animals, WLTm slim, attractive lady, to share interests and nice times together. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424043

HELLO my name is Paul, 43, 5ft9, from Sittingbourne in Kent, looking for someone to have some fun with and see where it goes! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422905

GENTLEMAN, 76yrs old, clean-shaven with a good head of hair and a smart dresser, hoping to meet a lady for friendship/relationship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423645

DAVE genuine guy, 6ft, black hair, blue eyes, medium build, likes sports, gardening, music, seeks female with GSOH and genuine. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 388372

BRIAN, 6ft3, fit, bit grey but genuine and kind, looking for a naughty female, for no strings adult fun, if you're interested please get back to me. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423483

SLIM, 5ft 6 white male WLTm 18 to 42 year old lady for friendship. Text only Mailbox: 5441709

KIND, caring lady of African origin, living in UK for past 20 years, looking for a gentleman who is kind and caring, must have a GSOH. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421041

LUCY, 32, blonde, tall and slim, looking for a casual fling, nothing serious. Discretion needed and assured. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 420237

SINGLE female, 68, n/s, GSOH, likes cooking, walking etc, seeks male, single, slim 65-70, n/s, with similar interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 420091

SLIM female GSOH, 5'3, Likes walking, pub lunches, days out, looking for soul mate, smart appearance, similar interests N/S GSOH, easy going. Text only to Mailbox no: 4762600

CHANTELLE, 5ft3 light brown/blonde hair, blue eyes, like nights in/out, walks, animals, romance seeks honest guy. Littlehampton. Text only to Mailbox no: 4923883

MARION, early 70s, young at heart, GSOH, active, likes walking, gardening, meals out, travel, theatre and animals, looking for male friendship to share interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 419657

MARIE, very lonely middle-aged woman, looking for a kind hearted older man, late 70s/early 80s for friendship/companionship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418955

RACHEL late 40s, blonde, blue eyes and very voluptuous. Looking for a kind, caring honest man. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418741

LIVELY old boy, OHAC, near sea in Folkestone, into red wine, garlic and Radio 3, seeks lady companion/lover, 58-68 y.o. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422621

MALE, 53, 5ft6, single, hardworking, looking for slim/small lady, 40-56. Maidstone, Kent. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423363

OUTGOING male, seeking attractive female, likes sports, music, cinema and nights out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414793

ANDREW, 50, slim to medium build, lives in Ashford/Kent area, WLTm a women, 40-70, for discreet fun, would be great to hear from you so get back to find out more! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423271

GARY, 53, caring, likes snooker, books, looking for a nice woman to meet and fall in love with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423145

EDWARD, 77, looking for a companion South East area of Kent, for holidays, days out, social events, and lots more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423039

HAPPY go lucky divorced man, 48, 6ft, well built, seeks gorgeous female to share love and laughs with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383719

TONY black male, 58, 5ft6, med build, n/s, seeking a local mature fun loving female 40/75 in the Chatham/Gillingham area for discreet fun. Text only Mailbox: 5459052

BARRY 47, 6ft, well built, seeks female for dining, dining and fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 361787

TALL single early 60's male looking for pure hearted lady for LTR. Text only Mailbox: 5496781

GARY 48, 6ft, well-built, dark hair, brown eyes, seeks passionate female for fun times in and out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 387175

VINCENT 48, 6ft, well built, seeks lady for fun nights in and out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 377397

MALE, widower, n/s, would love to meet buxom friendly lady, up to 70, for friendship at first, interests include all types of music, walking, quizzes. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422957

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

HELLO my name is Paul, 43, 5ft9, from Sittingbourne in Kent, looking for someone to have some fun with and see where it goes! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422905

WRITER, tall, slim, fit, natural dark hair, generous, seeks lady for erotic rendezvous, I will make it worth your while! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422777

49YR old male, 6ft, well built, seeks female to wine/dine and have fun with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 390929

SUGAR Daddy available! Mature, tall, slim, natural dark hair, seeks lady, age unimportant. Not afraid of commitment. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416889

48YR old divorced male, 6ft, well built, seeks lady for fun and laughter. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 380789

PHILLIP, 66, into farming and country life, looking for a loyal, genuine lady, someone I can trust, to go on holidays with and spend time together. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422699

TONY, early 60s, 6ft, slim, fit, easy going, looking for no strings fun with a lady, age unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422643

HANDSOME male, mid 40s, dark hair, hazel eyes, wishes to meet appropriate female for fun, friendship and perhaps more, please get in touch if interested. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422587

LOCAL Sevenoaks man, seeks local lady for fun and friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 417127

PAUL 52, seeks loving female for exciting times, meals out, weekends away, cosy nights in. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418077

MALE, 54, shyish, looking for fun times with a lady, 60-70, with GSOH, status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422431

PAUL 49 5ft 8ins likes eating/nights in/out seeks loving female for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404013

PROFESSIONAL, romantic male, 44, likes meals out, cinema, music, holidays, seeks female, 30-55 for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 250195

CHRIS, from Folkestone, 71, 5ft9, widower, green eyes, lonely, n/s, OHAC, likes gardening, the coast, pubs, dining out, holidays, cruises, days out, WLTm similar lady to share interests, can travel. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422375

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PAUL GSOH, 5ft 8ins, medium build, seeking Miss Right for LTR to put the spark back into life. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 391970

MIKE, 64, outgoing person, enjoys life, likes sport, cricket, nice meals out, holidays, WLTm someone to share interests and quality time. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422329

TERRY, 54, bi curious, looking for mature male, 65+, for first time experience. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424109

SLIM straight guy into CD and role-play, WLTm similar for friendship and fun. Text only Mailbox: 554057

CD male, into wrestling, looking for CD, bi or gay male, 45-55, for friendship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423833

TVBI CD, seeks feminine male with similar interests for discreet daytime meets. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 46735

BI male, aged 54 seeks similar for friendship and fun. Text only Mailbox: 462358

FEMALE seeking genuine straight female for daytrips, out to meet socially for lunch/coffee. Text only to Mailbox No: 4748240

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URBAN APPEAL: the Skoda Yeti



VERSATILE: the Skoda Fabia supermini



SUCCESS STORY: three generations of Octavia

Octavia celebrates 20th birthday

BRAND UPDATE: Czech brand's flag waver is its most successful and most recognisable model – now into its third generation...

SKODA is currently celebrating the 20th anniversary of its most successful model: the Octavia family hatch and estate, now into its third generation.

The first Octavia came off a brand new production line built following the Czech marque's takeover by VW, starting a success story that buried those tired old Soviet era jokes and created a brand now regularly topping customer satisfaction polls.

The current Octavia epitomises this, delivering much within a relatively compact frame, whether it's the versatile hatchback or roomy estate – they sell in nearly equal numbers.

There is an impressive vRS sporting option too, plus the availability of 4x4 or, for the rural set, vets, surveyors and the like, the Scout estate with 4x4, raised ride height and extra bodywork protection.

If you really must take the challenging route though, the formidable Yeti Outdoor SUV is available in full 4x4 and 'protected state' while the standard front-wheel drive car is spacious, practical and economical enough to battle rivals in the crossover sector.

There are popular small cars too: the brilliant Citigo three and five-door city car – on balance, the best in its class – and the Fabia supermini.

The latter sells as a hatchback or surprisingly



SIMPLY SUPERB: Skoda's flagship

capacious estate and is far more stylish than its predecessor which, like so many superminis, tried too hard to emulate the mini-MPV approach of Honda's Jazz.

But the last word rightly goes to the aptly named Superb, Skoda's flagship. Perhaps previously burdened by expectations arising

from such a label, the Superb – saloon or estate – truly is superb now.

It looks and feels much like an Audi A6 for a lot less money. It might not have such a sporty chassis, but buyers who desire comfort and class may prefer the Skoda – and cash left over for serious luxury weekends away.

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Official fuel consumption for the ŠKODA range pictured above in mpg (litres/100km): Urban 36.7 (7.7) to 50.4 (5.6); Extra Urban 53.3 (5.3) to 72.4 (3.9); Combined 45.6 (6.2) to 62.8 (4.5). CO₂ emissions for the ŠKODA range pictured above are 142 to 108g/km. Standard EU test figures are for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results.

Megane is just so 'Modern French'

Finally, Renault has a car to attack the VW Golf on quality while upholding the brand's je ne sais quoi, writes **Stever Loader...**

PICTURES don't do justice to the latest Renault Megane, fourth in a dynasty that has always tried to cut a dash.

With an eye on the VW Golf, seen as the benchmark in family hatchbacks, there is also a solidity and quality about the latest Megane.

Of course, it wouldn't be a Renault if there weren't tricks and gizmos to catch the eye too, like a remote control key resembling a bar of posh hotel courtesy soap.

Or the 'mode lighting': no different shades and patterns on the dashboard to tell you what driving mode you've selected, the Megane tells you with strips of light in various places, the two extremes being red for Sport and green for Eco - logical enough.

The attempt to re-create an iPad mini as the touchscreen, falls short of the original ambition though: I found it fiddly and a distraction from watching the road, with poor touch sensitivity on the car I drove and a general lack of digital radio info onscreen: I've got used to seeing what programme or track I'm listening to with DAB radio, and I miss it if it's not there.

Pushing aside this niggle though, Renault has created a highly



appealing car dripping with the je ne sais quoi that has made the latest Clio supermini and the Captur and Kadjar crossovers such a hit - they have a style and image that you can't quite define.

Describing the interior is also tough: Renault says it's bigger than before, but there's a sports car

intimacy about it, helped by snug, bum-hugging seats on the upmarket Dynamique S Nav model tested.

The boot at least is measurably bigger at 434 litres and makes the Golf (380), Ford Focus (316) and Vauxhall Astra (370) all look pokey, though it does lack the decent shopping hooks and restraints that



brands like Skoda are adding.

Out on the road, the Megane is 'modern French': the 'comfort is everything' approach has gone, so no lolling on the bends as a sacrifice to equilibrium over anecdotal Gallic cobbles.

Instead, the comfort remains and the handling is decently sharp,

Renault Megane Dynamique S Nav dCi 110

Price:	from £20,400
Driving appeal:	★★★★
Image:	★★★★★
Space:	★★★★★
Value:	★★★★
Running costs:	★★★★
How green?:	★★★★
Best rival:	Vauxhall Astra

though keen drivers must check out GT models or wait for inevitable Renaultsport snorters if they crave sharper handling.

Engine-wise, Renault rarely puts a foot wrong these days, from small turbocharged petrol units up to impressively smooth, clean and frugal diesels, but the familiar 1.5 dCi unit fitted on the test car is usually the pick, and didn't disappoint here.

It rarely intrudes into the cabin and delivers liveliness in Sport mode (0-62mph in 11.3 seconds and, of course, parsimonious returns in Eco (76.4mpg official combined).

The final tempter is that Renault does offer one of the better warranties: four years/100,000 miles.

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The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the car shown are: urban 68.9 (4.1); extra-urban 80.7 (3.5); combined 76.4 (3.7). The official CO₂ emissions are 96g/km. EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008 test environment figures. Fuel consumption and CO₂ may vary according to driving styles, road conditions and other factors.

Finance provided by Renault Finance, PO Box 149, Watford WD17 1FJ. Subject to status. Indemnities may be required. UK residents (excludes the Channel Islands). Over 18s. Terms and conditions apply. Offer based on 6,000 miles per annum, excess mileage 8p per mile inc VAT. Offers cannot be used with other schemes or finance offers and are available on featured new vehicle when ordered by 30 September 2016 and registered by 31 December 2016. Car shown with optional i.d. metallic paint, at an extra £625. *Deposit contribution shown is available when taking out finance on an All-New Renault MEGANE GT Nav dCi 110 with Renault Finance.

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Main Dealer Servicing

Your guide to...

Buyers love their dealer 'history'

PROTECT a hefty investment by keeping your new car's servicing up to date, and having repairs carried out promptly and competently.

The traditional guarantee used to be a full main dealer service history (FMDSH) a reassuring record that everything required for the manufacturer's warranty had been carried out.

But this became seen as a restrictive practice, so the EU made it illegal in 2002 for manufacturers to insist their cars were maintained by their franchised network to uphold the guarantee, which opened the way for independent garages and servicing centres to take on the work.

Nevertheless, many car buyers still believe main dealer servicing is



best to maintain reliability and the part exchange/secondhand value of the car, since used car buyers will

usually pay a premium for an FMDSH, particularly on sophisticated models.

Sceptics argue that this perceived premium is wiped out by higher main dealer service costs, but franchised networks have raised their game since the 2002 legislation.

Indeed, with car sales and profits squeezed during the recession, dealers aimed to be more competitive on servicing and ancillaries like tyres, while delivering better customer service.

They also foster the perception that only main dealers' service technicians can know a brand's cars as well they do, while 'all makes' centres must spread expertise across many marques.

And dealers know that happy service customers keep coming back, each time seeing the latest new cars just feet from the service desk – one day soon, they may buy again.



WORTH PROTECTING WITH AN FMDSH? the Skoda Octavia Estate and Nissan Qashqai crossover



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Dealers hit back at 'quick fit' trend

IT'S tempting to try to save the car budget by using a local 'quick/fast-fit' centre.

These have prospered as drivers try to save on motoring 'consumables': exhausts, tyres, batteries, clutches, shock absorbers, air conditioning checks and routine services.

But main dealers have hit back, reckoning that if drivers are still using their service bays, they'll be open to realistic deals on such items to ensure a time-saving one-stop shop purchase.

Using a main dealer also guarantees genuine manufacturers' parts are used, bringing the confidence of additional quality and reliability.

And that same guarantee, plus realistic pricing has encouraged getting bodyshop repairs done either by the franchise or one with its seal of approval. Main dealers have also borrowed from quick-fit rivals, by

offering menu pricing: a customer can decide what he wants and know in advance what it will cost.

Some dealers will even let you spread the cost via a finance or servicing scheme. They may also offer a loyalty scheme to retain owners of older models rather than see them defect to the non-franchised sector, because those owners believe their car's lower value does not warrant the higher perceived cost of main dealer servicing.

Another trick borrowed from the quick-fitters is longer opening hours; dealers realise many customers want to drop their car off early on their way to work and collect at the end of the day – a courtesy car may even be offered. Centralised bookings can often be made too, so that customers living midway between franchised dealers within the same group can pick the most convenient service slots available.



DEALS ON WHEELS: check whether your main dealer can offer a competitive price and one-stop shop if you damage tyres or an exhaust on your new Skoda Fabia or Nissan Note



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- Read the warranty document thoroughly to ensure there are no possible pitfalls to endanger your guarantee.
- Act on recalls from the manufacturer for checks or replace-

ments, even if they do not relate specifically to safety – it will help maintain the warranty and future saleability of the car.

- Don't rely on the MOT as assurance of the car's safety and reliability, even if it has just passed with flying colours – problems can arise at any time and you should get them checked as soon as possible.

- Check lights regularly for safety and legality. Get used to 'lighting up' in the garage or when you are nosed in or backed up to a wall.

- Check tyres – including the spare – monthly, and that includes the correct pressures as listed in the handbook or the sticker often placed on the driver's side door-frame. Though the legal tread depth is 1.6mm, replace at 2mm, especially in winter when icy and wet conditions compromise grip.

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- Shop around for servicing. Even if you are committed to main-dealer servicing, you don't have to use the one where you bought the car – some are better on pricing and customer service than others.



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For an informal discussion about the roles, please call Deborah Upton on 01304 751038.

Closing date: Midday on Monday 26 Sept 2016
Interviews: Wednesday 5 October 2016



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Only those with childcare experience, or relevant childcare qualifications should apply.

Due to the conditions and complex needs of the pupils at Abbey Court School, continuity and consistency of support is paramount and therefore candidates for all positions will need to commit to the full working hours of the post.

This School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Any offer of appointment for post is subject to a satisfactory Criminal Record Bureau Disclosure.

For an application pack, please write to/telephone (stating the role for which you are applying):

Mrs Linda Taylor, School Business Manager
Abbey Court School, Rede Court Road, Strood, Kent, ME2 3SP
(01634 338236)

Please note CV's will **NOT** be accepted.

Closing date: 30.9.16

Interview date: 11.10.16



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Closing date: Wednesday 21 September 2016 at noon.

Swale Academies Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check.

Contact Details

Tel: 01795 477475 Fax: 01795 479461
Email swa@westlands.kent.sch.uk
Headteacher: Mr S Cox MA
Trust Principal: Mr J Whitcombe MA



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The Governors at Abbey Court School are seeking to appoint a...

Deputy Headteacher

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We are looking for a dynamic and forward thinking individual, who has the passion, commitment and drive to maintain the school's outstanding status. The ideal candidate will be an effective decision maker who can enthuse parents and staff, as well as having an ability to engage the wider community. Flexibility, the ability to respond to daily events and effective prioritisation are essential requirements. The successful candidate will work in partnership with the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher, and will have responsibility for the day to day running of one site, ensuring continuous improvement in all areas.

In return, the school can offer: happy children who respond well to challenge, an exciting, enquiry based approach to teaching and learning, a commitment to continuous professional development, which promotes and encourages further Leadership development and freedom to develop the role further.

Abbey Court School delivers a full curriculum to pupils with Severe, and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties between the ages of 3 to 19. The school is split and currently based at two sites 12 miles apart: (Nursery/Primary in Rainham and Secondary/ F.E. in Strood). The Primary provision will move to a new purpose built school in April 2017.

Telephone enquiries and informal visits to the school are warmly welcomed.

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Any offer of appointment for post is subject to a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure.

Closing Date: 30 September 2016

Interviews: 12 & 13 October 2016

For further details and a job description, please contact Mrs Linda Taylor, Abbey Court School, Rede Court Road, Strood, Kent, ME2 3SP (01634 338236)



"We grow people"

Abbey Court School provides a stimulating, challenging and safe learning environment where pupils and staff efforts, work and achievement are celebrated

We are currently looking for a

Teacher for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties to commence September 2016

MPS/UPS + SEN + TLR 2C £2,640 ~ (TLR with previous experience)

Abbey Court School caters for pupils aged 3-19 with Severe Learning Difficulties, and is currently located in pleasant surroundings on 2 sites; Rainham (Nursery & Primary) and Strood (Secondary & Further Education). The Primary provision will move to a new purpose built school in April 2017. The school has educational resources of enviable proportions and has been judged 'outstanding' in the last 2 Ofsted inspections. This post would suit newly qualified teachers, or those wishing to gain further experience of SEN. Comprehensive induction and training will be provided. Telephone enquiries and informal visits to the school are welcomed.

Due to the conditions and complex needs of the pupils at Abbey Court School, continuity and consistency of support is paramount and therefore candidates for all positions will need to commit to the full working hours of the post.

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Any offer of appointment for post is subject to a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure.

Closing Date: 30 September 2016 ~ Interview Date: 14 October 2016

For further details and a job description, please contact Mrs Linda Taylor, Abbey Court School, Rede Court Road, Strood, Kent, ME2 3SP (01634 338236), stating the position for which you are applying.

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Table tennis star tastes glory in Rio

Will Bayley won a gold medal to go one better than London

Paralympics

By Matt McGeehan

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

WILL Bayley was once laughed off the table but he stood on top of it as Paralympic champion on Monday after overcoming all the odds and a partisan Brazilian crowd.

The 28-year-old from Tunbridge Wells won Great Britain's 24th gold medal of the Rio Games earlier this week with a 3-1 Class 7 singles final win over Brazil's Israel Stroh.

"When I first came into the GB table tennis team, 14 years ago, we were laughed off the table," he said.

"I came in and the Chinese, the Ukrainians, they looked at us and thought 'these guys are muppets and can't do anything, they'll never do anything'.

"This was the impossible but I've come here and I've conquered."

Bayley won 11-9 5-11 11-19 11-4 before mounting the table to celebrate.

"A couple of seconds later I thought 'this is stupid, but I've got to blag it and keep on putting my hands in the air'," Bayley said.

"I have never done that before. And to be honest I think if I did it now I probably wouldn't be able to get on the table.

"It was the adrenalin that helped me jump on the table. I've never moved so fast in my life."

World champion Bayley was born with arthrogryposis, a rare congenital disorder that affected all four of his limbs.

He underwent numerous operations at Great Ormond Street Hospital from the age of three months old.



CHAMPION: Will Bayley with his gold medal in Brazil this week

He was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma at the age of seven and began playing table tennis when his grandmother bought him a table after he recovered from chemotherapy.

He paused to consider his journey, not just in life but also in the sport of table tennis.

"I've been through a lot," he admitted after his victory.

"I was one of the best players in Class 6 and then I got reclassified, so it was a massive blow.

"That was the main reason I'm here today. People wrote me off and you should never write Will Bayley off."

Shakey set to 'get real' as Showdown kicks off

Motorsport

SHEPPEY superbike star Shane 'Shakey' Byrne says he is looking to bounce back from last weekend's disappointment as the championship enters the Showdown stage at Donington Park.

After missing out on the podium at Oulton Park, the Be Wiser Ducati rider sits three points adrift of leader Leon Haslam and is looking to make amends in Leicestershire this weekend.

During the Showdown, the top six riders in the championship standings become the title fighters for the final three events.

Each rider begins with 500 points, plus additional points for each podium position they obtained in the main season: five for a win, three for



READY: Shane Byrne is looking to bounce back. Photo: Andy Kelly

a second, and one for a third.

The standard points scoring format from the main season then

continues for The Showdown, with all points scored from the final seven races counting.

Byrne said: "I really looked forward to the last round at Oulton Park to check our progress since we were there in May. I set the fastest ever two-wheeled lap there last weekend but then had three terrible races.

"However, it showed the progress we've made with the Ducati, and at the pre-season test at Donington Park. I was very fast and if we show the same amount of progression as in recent rounds, then we should be really strong.

"Now it gets real, it's the Showdown. I want a fifth title and have to give my all to achieve it starting this weekend."

Dover sidcar champion Ryan Charlwood is also in action.

North & West

Hennon 'gutted' to pull out of last minute fight

A SNODLAND boxer who has withdrawn from his next fight after failing to sell enough tickets says he is "massively gutted".

Welterweight prospect George Hennon accepted a last minute offer to step into the ring with veteran fighter Jason Nebitt in Essex next weekend, having originally aimed to take a break until November.

"It was just too short notice and I couldn't sell enough tickets to cover the costs," the 22-year-old said.

"I did over half my allocation but it was still not enough to cover the opponent's wages and the house.

"A lot of people that normally get ringside were getting standard tickets so that brought the amount down dramatically.

"I'm massively gutted because I just wanted to get out and get another win on the record, but boxing is a business and ticket sales are one of the biggest things so without that covered, you can't fight."

His next fight is on November 12.



DISASTER: George Hennon



CHAMPIONS: Jack Playford and Lewis and Nathan Hammond

Trio inspire GB to gold in canoe polo champs

A TRIO of young canoe polo stars from Bexley have helped a Great Britain U21 team strike gold in the world championships.

Sidcup's Jack Playford and Welling twins Lewis and Nathan Hammond were selected to play for their country last year having impressed with Meridian Canoe Club in Bexleyheath, who play in the country's top division.

They became a fundamental part of a new-look side that finished fourth in the European Championships as well as fine displays in other tournaments in Belgium and Italy.

But the three players have now returned from Sicily as world champions with gold medals around their necks, with Playford also picking up the additional prize of being top goalscorer.

Gills sell out allocation for Spurs

GILLINGHAM have sold out their allocation for their EFL Cup clash with Tottenham next week.

Boss Justin Edinburgh, who won the competition with Spurs as a player back in 1999, takes his team to White Hart Lane on Wednesday evening looking to spring an upset, just as they did by beating Premier League outfit Watford in the previous round at Vicarage Road.

and some 3,000 Gills fans will be joining them in north London.

However, midfielder Jamie O'Hara is an injury doubt to face his former club.

"He had a setback last week, he's picked up an injury to his heel, so that's a real blow," Edinburgh confirmed.

"We've got to assess that over the next couple of days."

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